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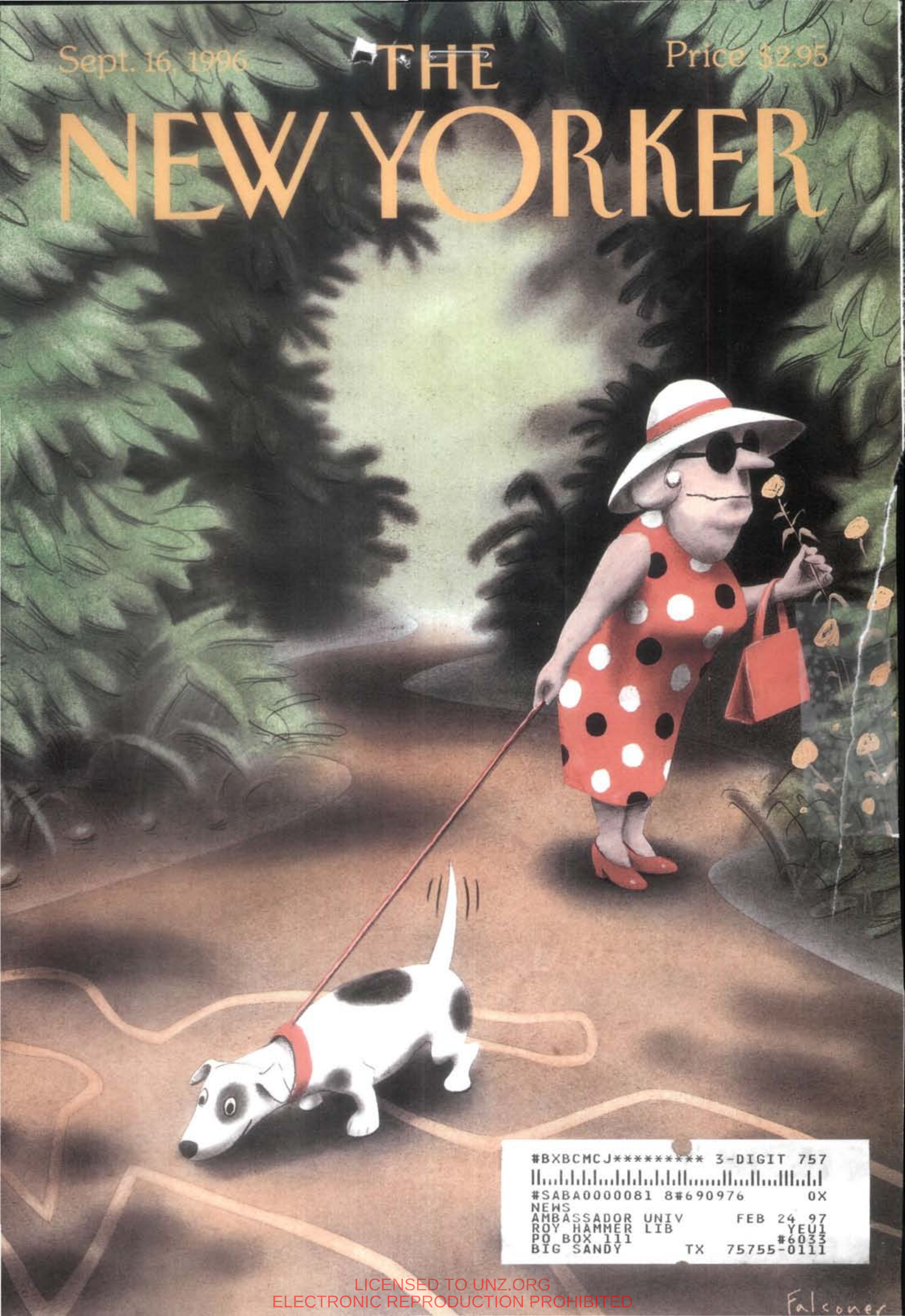

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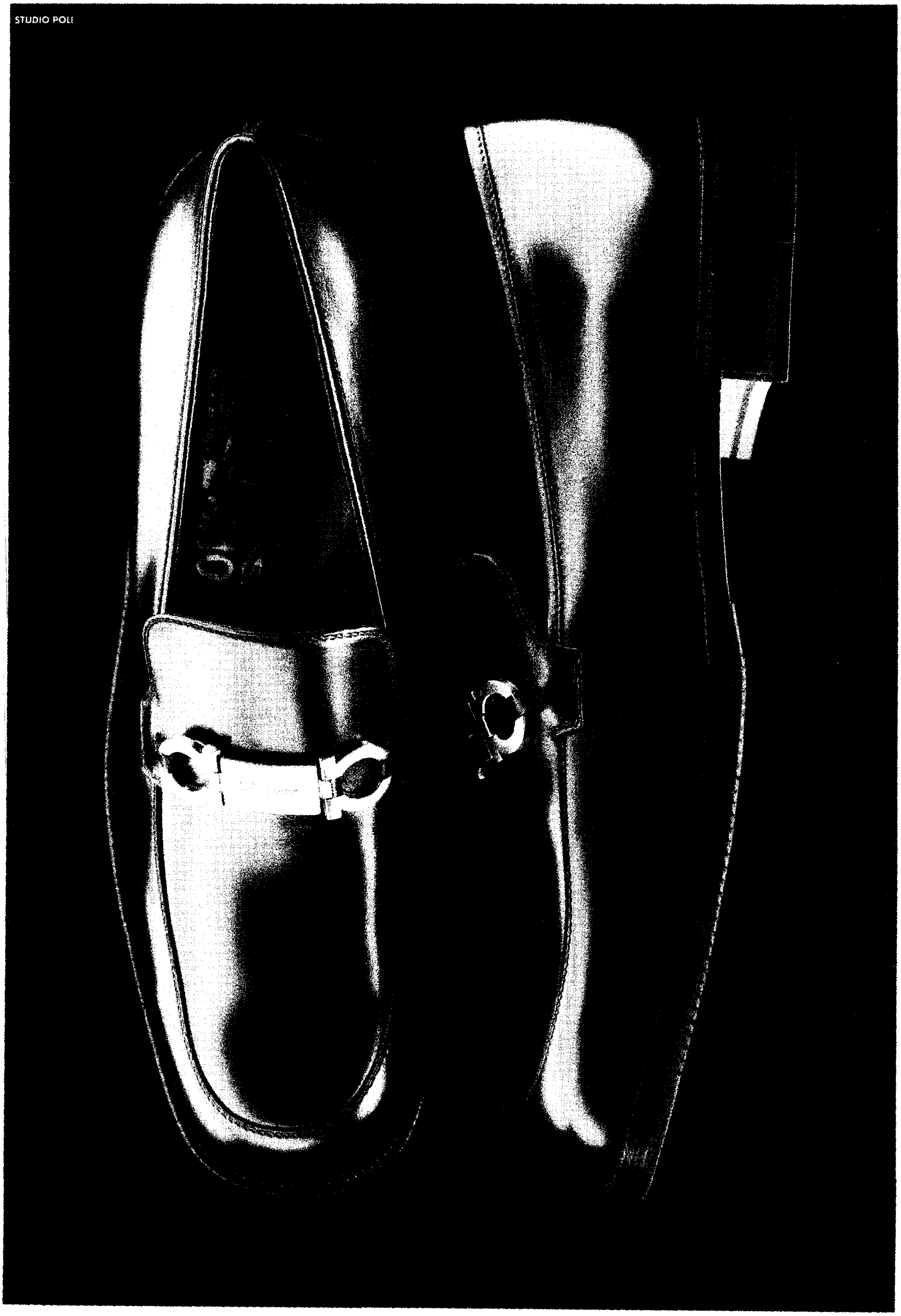
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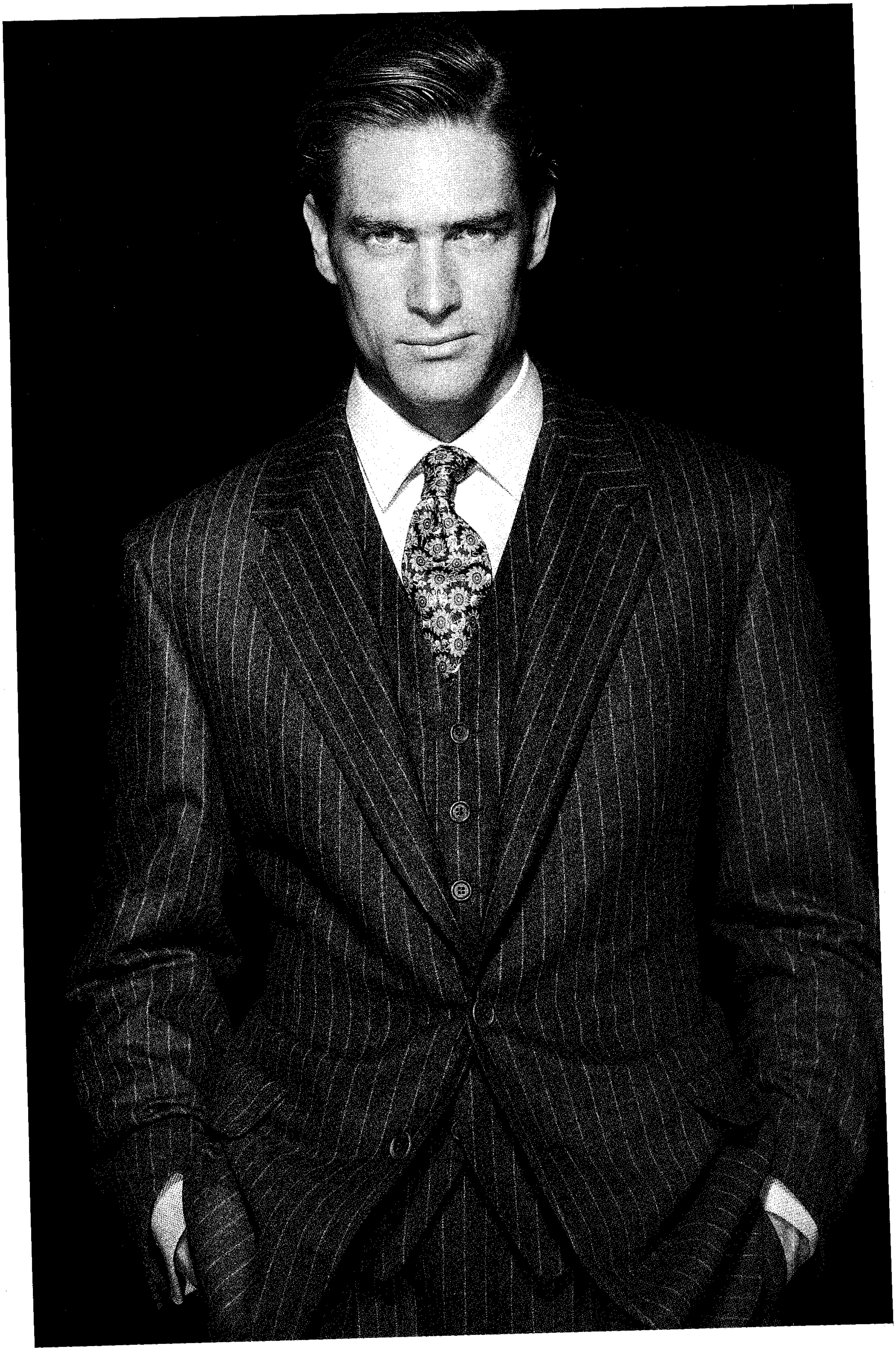

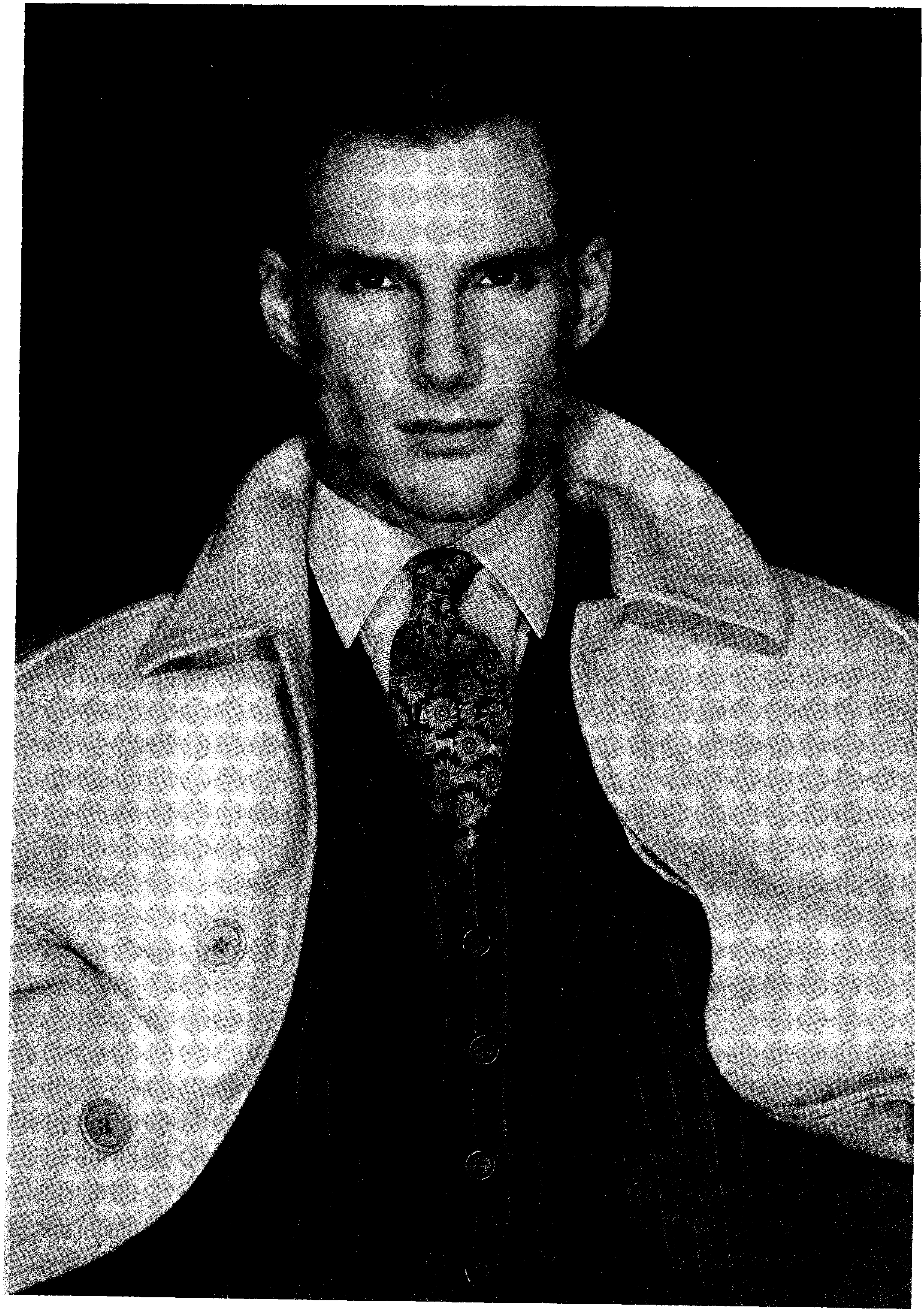

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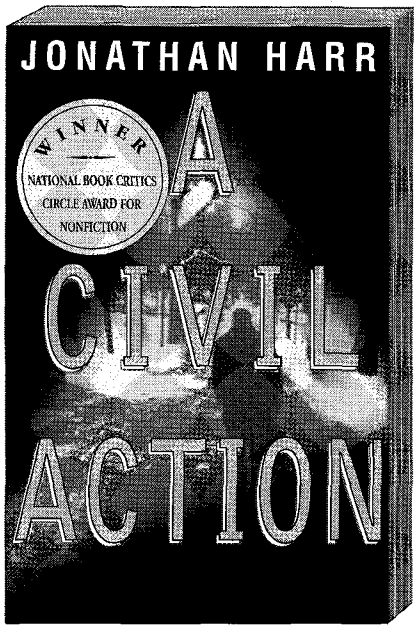

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SEPTEMBER 16, 1996

COMMENT Iraq Ad Hoc . . . *Michael Kelly* 7
The White House redefines strategy.

IN THE MAIL . . . 10

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN . . . 12

THE TALK OF THE TOWN . . . 43
The journalist and Yeltsin's heart; the rocking Murdoch; etc.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the West Bank Battling Over Abraham . . . *Amy Wilentz* 46
The patriarch at the center of the peace process.

Reflections In the Face . . . *Richard Ford* 52
Thoughts on a shot to the chops.

Personal History A Drugstore Eden . . . *Cynthia Ozick* 56
The author's secret in the Bronx.

A REPORTER AT LARGE Admiral Boorda's War . . . *Peter J. Boyer* 68
What killed the Chief of Naval Operations?
Not just the controversy over his decorations
but the war that began at Tailhook.

SHOWCASE Refashioning Diana Vreeland . . . *Josef Astor, Nancy Franklin* 86

FICTION "Warm Dogs" . . . *Paul Theroux* 88
What's a family without children?

THE CRITICS

Books The essence of Samuel Beckett . . . *George Steiner* 92
Joan Didion's "The Last Thing He Wanted" . . . *John Weir* 95
The Current Cinema "Fly Away Home," "American Buffalo" . . . *Anthony Lane* 97
The Theatre "Summer and Smoke," "Old Wicked Songs" . . . *John Lahr* 101
Mixed Media The new news . . . *James Wolcott* 104

POEM
"Marked Playing Cards" . . . *Charles Simic* 80

SHOUTS & MURMURS Return of the Cliché Expert . . . *Roger Angell* 108

COVER *Something in the Air, by Ian Falconer*

DRAWINGS *Charles Barsotti, Jack Ziegler, Danny Shanahan, William Hamilton, J. B. Handelsman, Tom Cheney, Leo Cullum, Michael Crawford, Max Beckmann, Mort Gerberg, Roz Chast, Robert Mankoff, Michael Maslin, Victoria Roberts, Mick Stevens*

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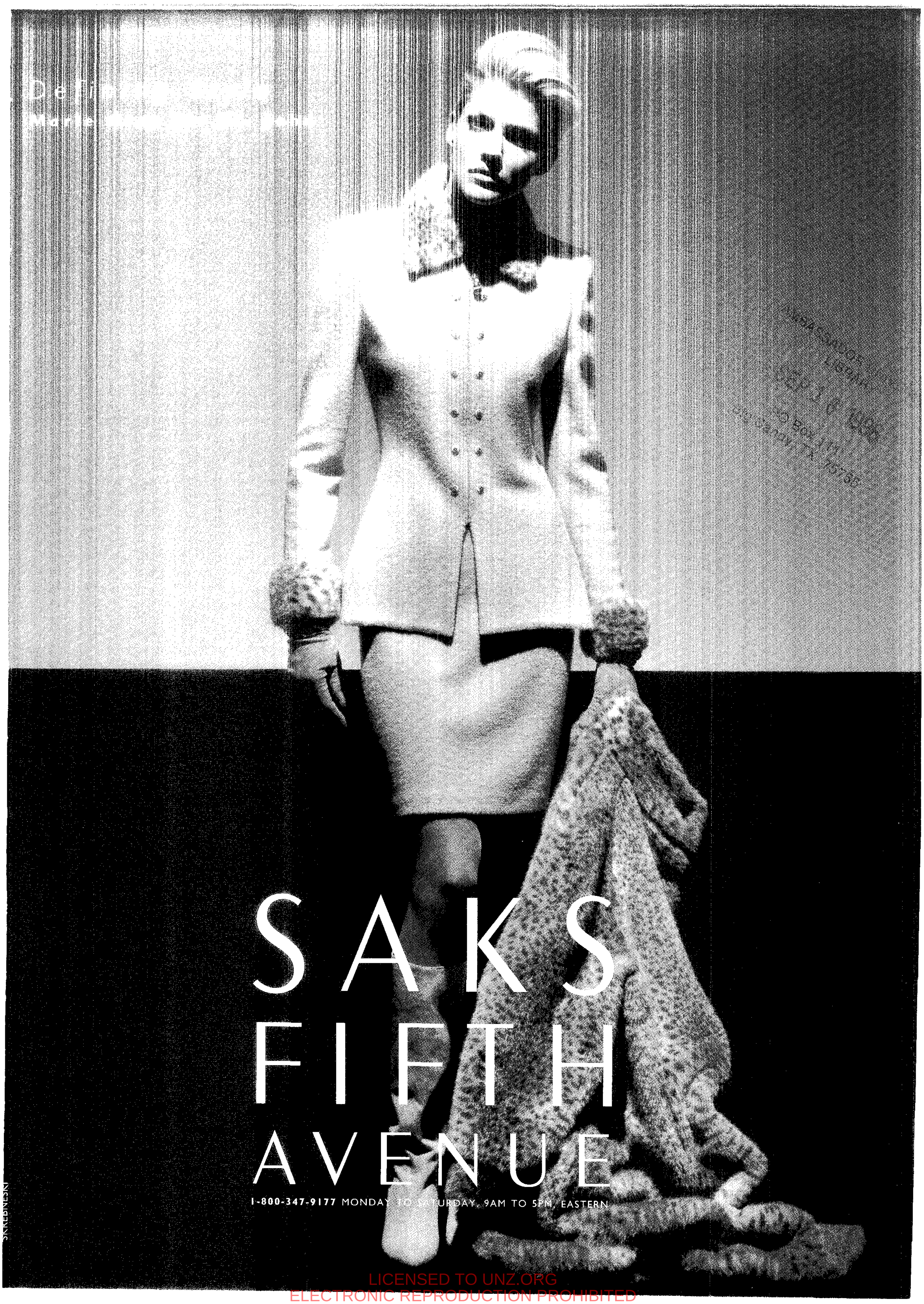
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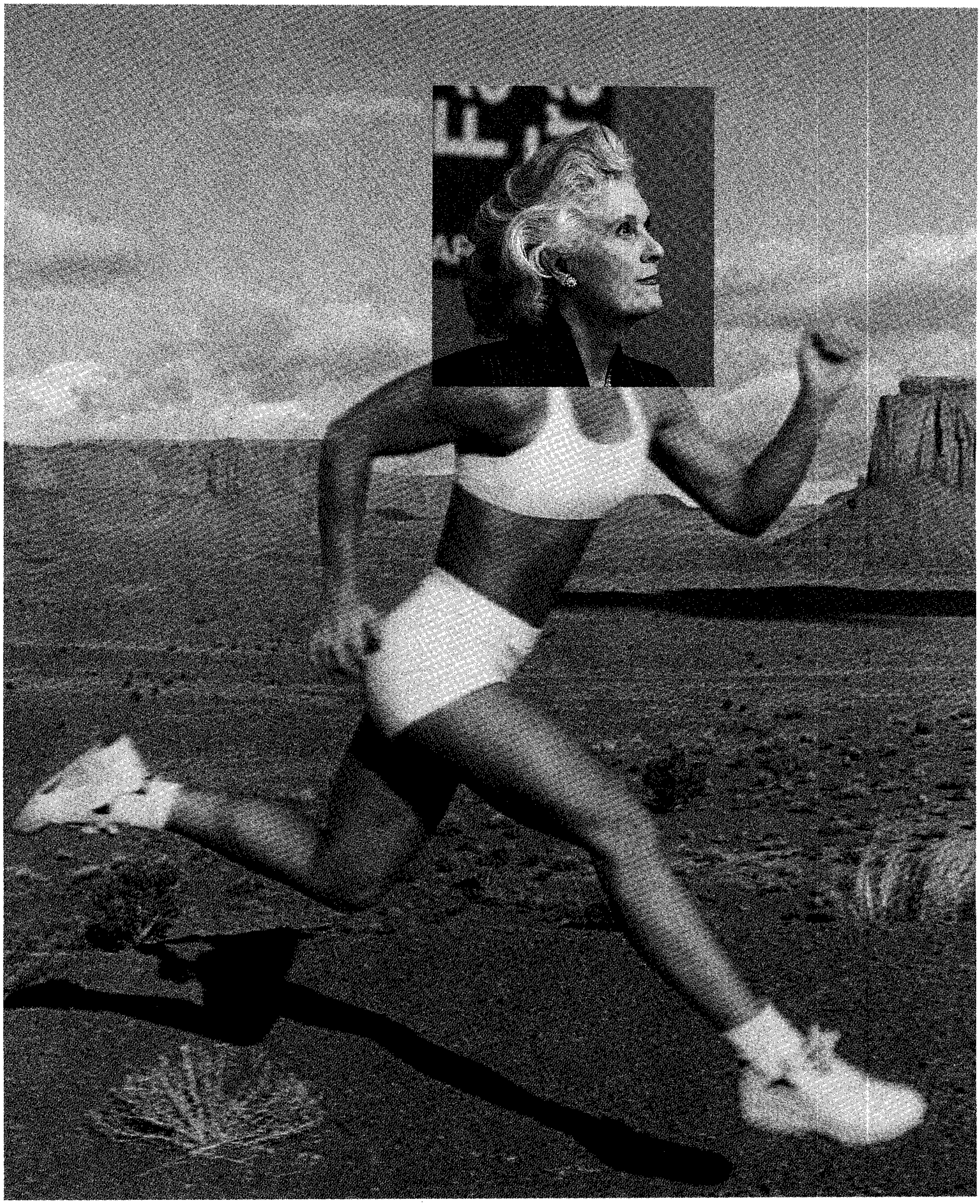

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COMMENT

IRAQ AD HOC

We're not muddling through clearly enough.

RECENTLY, the National Security Council sent out a letter advertising the formation of a new Office of Strategic Planning, controlled by a grandly named Strategic Planning Directorate. Planning strategies by which the President may best handle whatever is going on in the world is what the National Security Council is supposed to do, so, while it was surprising to find that up to now no one had been charged with this responsibility, it was comforting to learn that the new Strategic Planning Directorate would at last be taking the task in hand. One imagined the Directorate at its awesome work. "Gentlemen," the Director of the Directorate might murmur, his cool gaze raking the sombre, chiselled faces ranged around the great oak table in the map-lined room deep in the bowels of the White House, "you will concur, I trust, that the situation is both immediate and dire. The question now is what must be done. Henry, you have the floor." Actually, it turns out that the new Strategic Planning Directorate of the National Security Council consists of Antony J. Blinken, a thirty-four-year-old former reporter-turned-lawyer-turned-speechwriter, who is the Senior Director for Strategic Planning; Julia Moffett, a twenty-seven-year-old former assistant to the White House Communications Director, who is the Director for Communications; and two Directors for Speechwriting, an Associate Director for Communications, and an Office Administrator. It turns out, that is to say, that when the National Security Council plans strategy the things it plans are speeches and press releases.

For the National Security Council to have named its new public-relations office after what the National Security Council does not possess—a strategic plan—seemed especially appropriate last week. The United States fired forty-four missiles at military targets in the south of Iraq, to punish Saddam Hussein for invading the Kurdish city of Erbil, in the north of Iraq. The introduction of high explosives into diplomatic affairs usually has a clarifying effect, but President Clinton's decision last week to smite Saddam Hussein, mildly, produced muddlement. "When our interest and the security of our friends and allies is threatened, we will act with force if necessary," Clinton said in announcing the missile strikes. But what did that mean? It is a good thing to hit Saddam Hussein whenever an opportunity presents itself (and it is certainly a satisfying thing, and it is even more certainly a thing popular with the voters), but the fact is that the interests of no American friends or allies were threatened by Sad-

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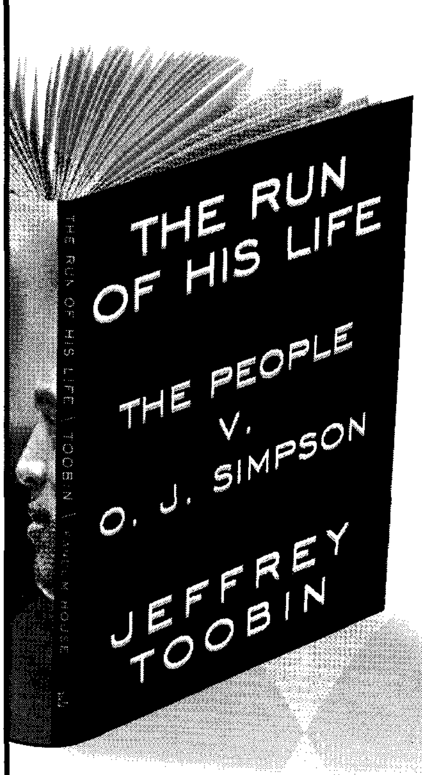
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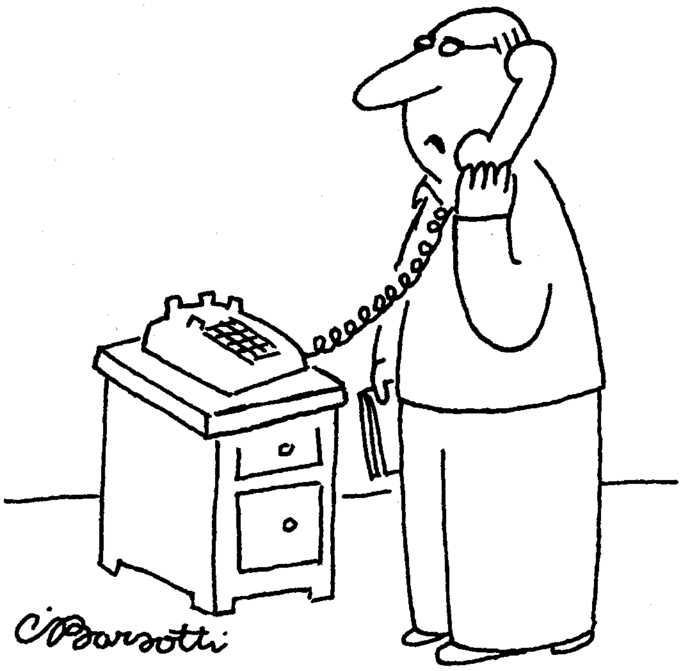

"I'm for Dole, the cockeyed optimist."

• •

dam's campaign to seize the city of Erbil from the forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The P.U.K., in its never-ending fight with its chief political rival, the Kurdish Democratic Party, had lately allied itself with Iran, Iraq's primary regional foe, and had, according to credible reports, invited Iranian elements onto Iraqi soil. The K.D.P. had then invited Saddam to send the Iraqi armed forces into the Kurdish north of Iraq. Saddam's subsequent attack on Erbil, while brutal and in some respects even criminal, was not directed against the United States or any ally of the United States, and could be defended as a proper response on the part of the government of Iraq to a violation of its territory by an avowed foe. Indeed, the decision to attack Iraq had the awkward effect of momentarily placing the armed forces of the United States in the implicit service of a nation described by our government as a leading enemy—Iran.

The President also said, "Our missiles sent the following message to Saddam Hussein: When you abuse your own people or threaten your neighbors, you must pay a price." But what did that mean? It has never been American foreign policy that "when you abuse your own people, or threaten your neighbors," the United States will bomb you. The United States enjoys cordial and profitable relations with numerous regimes that abuse their own people and threaten their neighbors. (China, that Most Favored Nation, comes to mind.) Finally, after the missile strikes, the President declared that "our mission has been achieved"—that it had "achieved the objectives we've set for it." And what did that mean? What was the mission? What were the objectives?

The confusion of the moment reflects a larger confusion. What is America's job in the world? Is it to protect America's interests—its security, its economy, its citizens? Or is it to extend the values of democracy? This choice between limited and unlimited responsibility was at the heart of the decision that President Bush was confronted with at the end of the Gulf War. If America's job in that war was to secure America's interests, then its work was finished when the Iraqi Army was crippled and driven from Kuwait. If America's job was to spread democratic values, then it had an obligation to free the Iraqi people from the mad rule of the despot Saddam. Bush answered with irresolution, choosing essentially to do both—to declare the mission accomplished without removing Saddam from power, but to commit the United States to achieving that goal over time. Thus did Mr. Bush bequeath to his successor a great hole in the strategic center of things.

Anthony Lake, the national-security adviser, has tried to fill that hole, but he has tried in the same way the Bush Administration tried—by seeking to elide the choice. In a series of speeches, Lake has attempted to fashion a theory of engagement based on the proposition that the protection of American interests and the spread of American values are essentially the same, because "enlarging the community of democracies is in America's interest."

But the harder Lake has tried to pin the thing down, the slipperier it has become. In his most ambitious speech—this March, at George Washington University—Lake outlined "seven circumstances, which, taken in some combination or even alone, may call for the use of force." The caveat—"taken in some combination or even alone, *may* call"—gives the game away. As Lake himself noted, the only circumstance that would automatically trigger the use of force was the first one—a direct attack on the United States, its people, or its allies. In the case of every other threat that Lake defined as a possible trigger to military action, the response would depend on the circumstances of the circumstances: "The greater the number and the weight of the interests in play, the greater the likelihood that we will use force—once all peaceful means have been tried and failed and once we have measured a mission's benefits against its costs, in both human and financial terms."

This isn't a a strategy; it's an argument for ad-hocracy. It says that the best the United States can do right now is to judge each occasion as it arises and act accordingly—to do what it must to protect its own interests and, when the costs are not too great, to do what it can to protect the larger interests of humanity. But if ad-hocracy is the best solution we can come up with, and it probably is, then what the United States faces is a series of testing moments—fleeting chances to make a difference by the swift, resolute use of overwhelming force. In a few instances in the past five years, the government has done that—in Haiti, most conspicuously. But in Iraq and in Bosnia the moments were missed, and they have proved very hard to seize in retrospect. It is a tough business, being the last, best hope of earth, and it requires a lot of work. One place to start would be to stop confusing the production of strategy with the production of words. —MICHAEL KELLY

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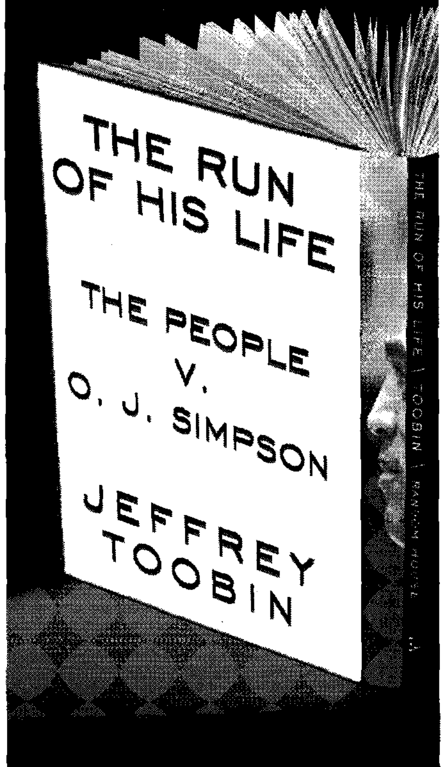

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IN THE MAIL

NOT JUST POLITICS

In " 'U.S.A.' Today" (Books, August 5th) Joseph Epstein claims that John Dos Passos's "U.S.A." is not a great American novel, because its aims are too limited. But if Epstein were to argue for a different definition of great books—say, ones that give people power, that enable them to critique the economic and political systems that determine their destiny—he would see it differently. The parallels between what Dos Passos saw sixty years ago as the dehumanizing effects of unchecked capitalism and our era's corporate and governmental war on the poor and the working class are striking. What might happen if impressionable nineteen-year-olds were to read the book today?

PHYLLIS FRUS
Palo Alto, Calif.

Mr. Epstein avers that Dos Passos's characters are wooden, but I first read "U.S.A." when I was ten, and I don't think I could have gotten through it if he were right. Although I wasn't sure what Wobblies were and although the death of Wesley Everest haunted me for years, I loved the book. In subsequent rereadings, I have certainly gotten more out of "U.S.A.," notably its political aspects. But I still feel that the characters which drew me into the work were the products of a writerly sensibility that eschewed conventional story lines and pat endings, not merely in the service of making an intellectual point but also in an attempt to embrace the full breadth, and messiness, of life.

ANNE MIDGETTE
New York City

POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY

The Natural Rate of Unemployment, which John Cassidy, in "The Growth Fallacy" (August 12th), claims cannot be reduced without new inflation, is no more "natural" than any other product of the human mind. It is the outcome of a variety of economic policies and conditions, and of political decisions as well—beginning with those decisions which helped produce the government's definition of unemployment. A more humane definition of joblessness, suggested by Lester Thurow and others, would include people who have stopped looking for nonexistent work and people who can find only part-time jobs. That rate would be nearly double the official one, and although it would not be "natural" either, it would accurately report the inhumane results of driving too many Americans to the margins of the labor force or entirely out of it. More economic growth might be possible if jobs could be found or created for the victims of today's economy.

HERBERT J. GANS
Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology
Columbia University
New York City

Mr. Cassidy doesn't question an implicit assumption of the "go-for-growth" argument: that growth is the solution to our problems. But given that the decades-long creation of the biggest economy in the world has resulted in ever wider disparities in the distribution of income and wealth in our society—that the very policies which maximize the size of the economic pie minimize the welfare of millions—maybe we should question the wisdom of continuing to bake bigger pies.

JEFFREY M. LOITER
Watertown, Mass.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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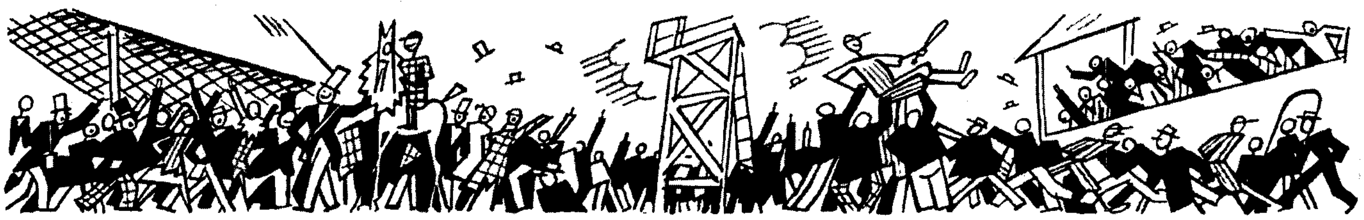

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Back on the Boulevard—An evening with Liliane Montevecchi, who will sing French cabaret classics and tunes by Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and others. Opens Sept. 11 at 8 and continues through Sept. 22. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Chimère—Zingaro, the French equestrian theatre troupe, opens the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, bringing horses (twenty-six of them), riders, acrobats, dancers, and an ensemble of Indian musicians together under the big top at Battery Park City. Opens Sept. 17 at 8 and continues through Oct. 27. (For more information, call 1-718 636-4100.)

Einstein: A Stage Portrait—John Crowther portrays the fluffy-haired physicist, in a new play by Willard Simms. Previews begin Sept. 12. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-6322.)

The Gospel at Colonus—A one-night-only benefit performance of Bob Telson and Lee Breuer's 1983 gospel-music version of Sophocles, with Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama. Sept. 16 at 7:30. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

Harrigan 'n Hart—The York Theatre Company's Musicals in Mufti series opens with a concert production of Michael Stewart, Peter Walker, and Max Showalter's 1985 portrait of the nineteenth-century comedy team. Sept. 13 at 8, Sept. 14 at 2:30 and 8, and Sept. 15 at 2:30. The series continues through Sept. 29. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

900 Oneonta—Jon Cryer leads the cast in Circle Repertory Theatre's season opener, a dark comedy by David Beaird about a dying Louisiana oil baron and his damaged family, which had its première last year in London's West End. In previews through Sept. 14. Opens Sept. 15 at 7. (632 Broadway, near Bleecker St. 505-6010.)

Radio Gals—An Arkansas music teacher (Carole Cook) turns her home into a nighttime radio station from which she broadcasts her own band, in a new musical by Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick (the creators of "Oil City Symphony"). Previews begin Sept. 17. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Sex and Longing—In Christopher Durang's new comedy, Sigourney Weaver and Jay Goede play friends who write a book about their sexual addictions, which comes under attack by right-wingers. A Lincoln Center Theatre production, directed by Garland Wright. Previews begin Sept. 12. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Skylight—From London, where it was originally staged at the Royal National Theatre, comes David Hare's latest drama, starring Michael Gambon and Lia Williams and directed by Richard Eyre. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

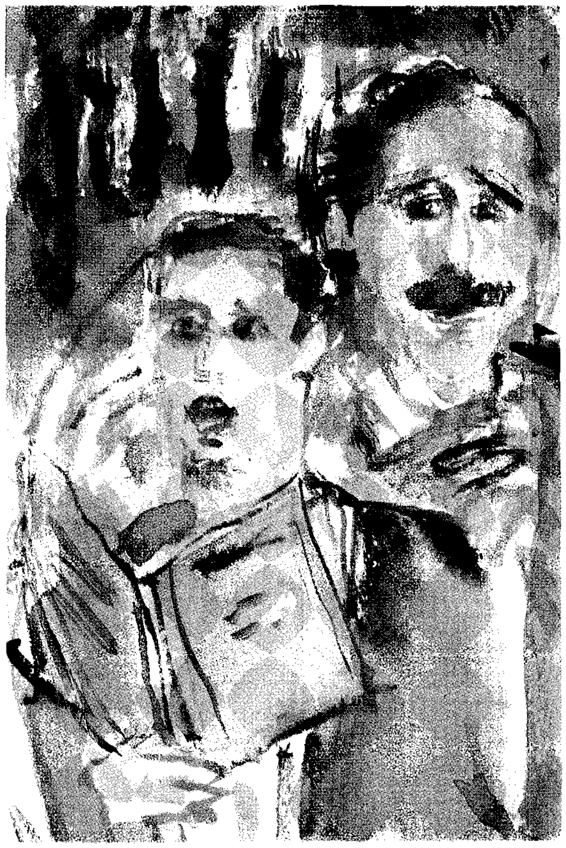
View of the Dome—Theresa Rebeck's new drama, about a Washington, D.C., attorney and her political machinations within a corrupt system. Previews begin Sept. 13. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

OPENED RECENTLY

The All-Nude College-Girl Revue—A return engagement of Lisa Faith Phillips's semiautobiographical play, about a coed who takes an unconventional job. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Big—This adaptation of the movie that starred Tom Hanks provides little joy, though Daniel Jenkins, as the twelve-year-old in a grown-up's body, is sweet and likable. Directed by Mike Ockrent. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/27/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Born to Sing!—This spin-off of the long-running gospel musical "Mama, I Want to Sing!" chronicles the increasingly chaotic world tour of gospel diva Doris Winter and the New York Reach Ensemble; the plot isn't compelling, and the acting isn't consistently good enough to make a difference. But that hardly matters, since the point, as in "Mama," is the music, and the music is glorious. All four of the main performers (Tanya Blount, Kellie D. Evans, Lisa Fischer, and Stacy Francis) have strong (and distinctly different) voices. Singing both standards and original songs, and backed by the impossibly energetic and gracious music minister, Charles Stewart, and the choir, they give the show the backbone it needs. You couldn't find a better introduction to gospel without going to church. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)



"Old Wicked Songs," at the Promenade.

DEBRA ROSS

The Boys in the Band—James Lecesne, as the swishy Emory, and David Greenspan, as the lethal Harold, have a field day in Mart Crowley's 1968 study of gay self-hatred. The script no longer seems particularly shocking (except in its viciousness) or politically suspect, but it holds up soundly in this impressive revival, which was supervised by the playwright and directed with buckets of bile by Kenneth Elliott. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk—In director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover's heroically energetic musical, the extraordinary Glover and his sensational group of young tap dancers and street drummers bring joy. They bring fury. They bring history and ecstasy. (5/20/96) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company takes aim at the 1996 Presidential campaign with a new revue, "Right to Laugh Party." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925—about a Florida land scheme—has moved to a new theatre, changed some cast members, and ironed out a number of the problems that plagued the original production downtown. The songs, which include "Always" and "Shaking the Blues Away," are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. Michael McGrath, in the Groucho role, is inspired, and Celia Tackaberry, channelling Margaret Dumont, makes a worthy foil. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Cowgirls—An appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, in which three chamber musicians are transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, and Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, are part of the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

A Delicate Balance—A bracing, astringent revival of Edward Albee's 1966 play about a family that has sacrificed much of its humanity for the sake of appearances. The cast, under the fine direction of Gerald Gutierrez, is uniformly excellent. (5/27/96) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 29.)

Disappearing Act—A new revue about big-city gay life, by Michael Oster. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Dixon Place—Sept. 11 and Sept. 13-14 at 8: "The Tall Blonde Woman in the Short Puerto Rican Body," Alba Sanchez's solo show about Nuyorican culture. . . . ¶ Sept. 14 at 10:30: "Thirty &

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Bloodthirsty," a new monologue by Amanda Vogel. Both shows continue through Sept. 21. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart, and Stephen Sondheim's 1962 musical-comedy version of a Roman farce is a joke play that begs for outrageousness. But Jerry Zaks's peppy, acrylic revival seldom enters that giddy zone of comic daring. (5/20/96) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Grace & Glorie—Tom Ziegler's predictable but charmingly told tale of an illiterate Virginia mountain woman (Estelle Parsons) and the Harvard M.B.A. (Lucie Arnaz) who befriends her in her last days. Under Gloria Muzio's direction, the two actresses make the blend of humor and pathos affecting rather than—as it might easily have been—cloying. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9393.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant, over-the-top designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this production (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop) is a fitting cap to his career. It's a revue of witty, satiric songs that purport to be part of a larger show that keeps falling apart, leaving Michael West, who plays Crabtree, wondering whether he should have become a chicken farmer. Some of the bits work better than others, but the combination of love songs ("Newt—I think you're cute," sings one forlorn man), charming silliness (a centaur wonders why the other guys at the gym treat him differently), and occasional serious moments, performed by a wonderful cast decked out in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes, is a sure sign that chicken farming's loss was our gain. With music by Dick Gallagher. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Hughie—Al Pacino stars as the blowhard gambler Erie Smith, in his own staging of Eugene O'Neill's 1941 drama. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

An Ideal Husband—In Oscar Wilde's hundred-and-one-year-old play, a youthful transgression comes back to threaten the career of a promising Cabinet member. The man who saves the day is played, with showy aplomb, by Martin Shaw. The rest of the delightful, mostly British cast, under the direction of Peter Hall, is well up to the Wildean wit and wisdom, and the evening flies by in a flash of epigrammatic splendor. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining such made-for-musical-theatre issues as parents who talk baby talk, the injustice of long ladies'-room lines, the gruesomeness of bridesmaids' dresses, and the unbearable triteness of shopping. Couples in the audience may nudge each other happily as they guess the actors' lines before they're uttered. Directed by Joel Bishoff. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

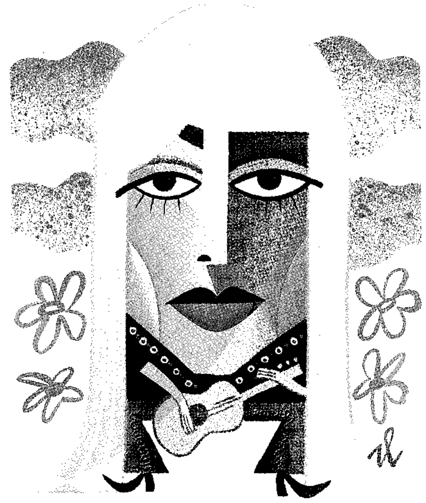
International Festival of Puppet Theatre—The biennial series of avant-garde works runs through Sept. 22. Performances at the Public Theatre (425 Lafayette St.; 563-5544) include "Erotec: The Human Life of Machines," a musical by Alice Farley and Henry Threadgill; "The Baroque Opera," by the Forman Brothers (twin sons of Milos), of the Czech Republic; and a version of Alfred Jarry's burlesque "Ubu Roi," presented by Hystopolis Productions. In addition to a 10:30 P.M. puppet lounge at P.S. 122 (150 First Ave.; 477-5288), the festival will also feature performances at La Mama (74A E. 4th St.; 475-7710), Dance Theatre Workshop (219 W. 19th St.; 924-0077), and the New Victory Theatre (209 W. 42nd St.; 563-5544).

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directed. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Love Thy Neighbor—In his latest two-hour monologue, Jackie Mason prowls the stage like a rabid penguin, parcelling out tough love with equal-opportunity glee. His range may be limited, but his timing is perfect, and the house rocks with laughter. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson—Eddie Frierson stars in his own one-man play, about the life of the celebrated New York Giants pitcher, who in 1936 became one of the first inductees into the Baseball Hall of Fame. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Misalliance—The Pearl Theatre Company opens the season with Shaw's 1910 satire. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)



John Kelly as Joni Mitchell, in "Paved Paradise."

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' drama, which had its première last November at Playhouse 91, about a jaded young pianist studying in Vienna (Justin Kirk) and the older Viennese music professor (Hal Robinson) who transforms his outlook. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Othello and the Circumcised Turk—Assurbanipal Babilla's take on the Moor's tragedy incorporates text and characters from other Shakespeare plays and Middle Eastern burlesque traditions. Continues, Thursdays through Sundays, through Sept. 29. (Vineyard's 26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 925-7469.)

O Wholly Night and Other Jewish Solecisms—A new one-woman play written and performed by Deb Margolin, in which a woman not unlike the playwright awaits the Messiah. Directed by Margot Lewitin. (Interart, 549 W. 52nd St. 279-4200.)

Paved Paradise—Performance artist John Kelly's solo musical work, a paean to Joni Mitchell. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

Phaedra—In his new one-person show, Everett Quinton, of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, plays a gum-chewing waitress in a Greek diner who starts out helping a high-school kid with his homework and ends up taking on all the roles in the tragic soap opera recalled in the title. But although Quinton cuts a striking figure, with his bald head and combat-fatigues gown, his frantic pace suggests that he's trying to make up in sweat what he lacks in art. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 29.)

The Sleeping Hippo—Max Mayer's drama about a woman who becomes involved in a triangle with a poor artist (who hangs out in her run-down East Village bar) and his rich patron. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 715-1808. Closes Sept. 29.)

Summer and Smoke—Mary McDonnell portrays the lonely spinster Alma Winemiller and Harry Hamlin the man she loves, in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Tennessee Williams's 1948 drama. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Valley of the Dolls—Theatre-a-Go-Go, from Los Angeles, offers a stage adaptation of the film adaptation of Jacqueline Susann's novel. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 14.)

What the Butler Saw—Jean Cocteau Repertory presents Joe Orton's 1969 satire, directed by Scott Shattuck. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

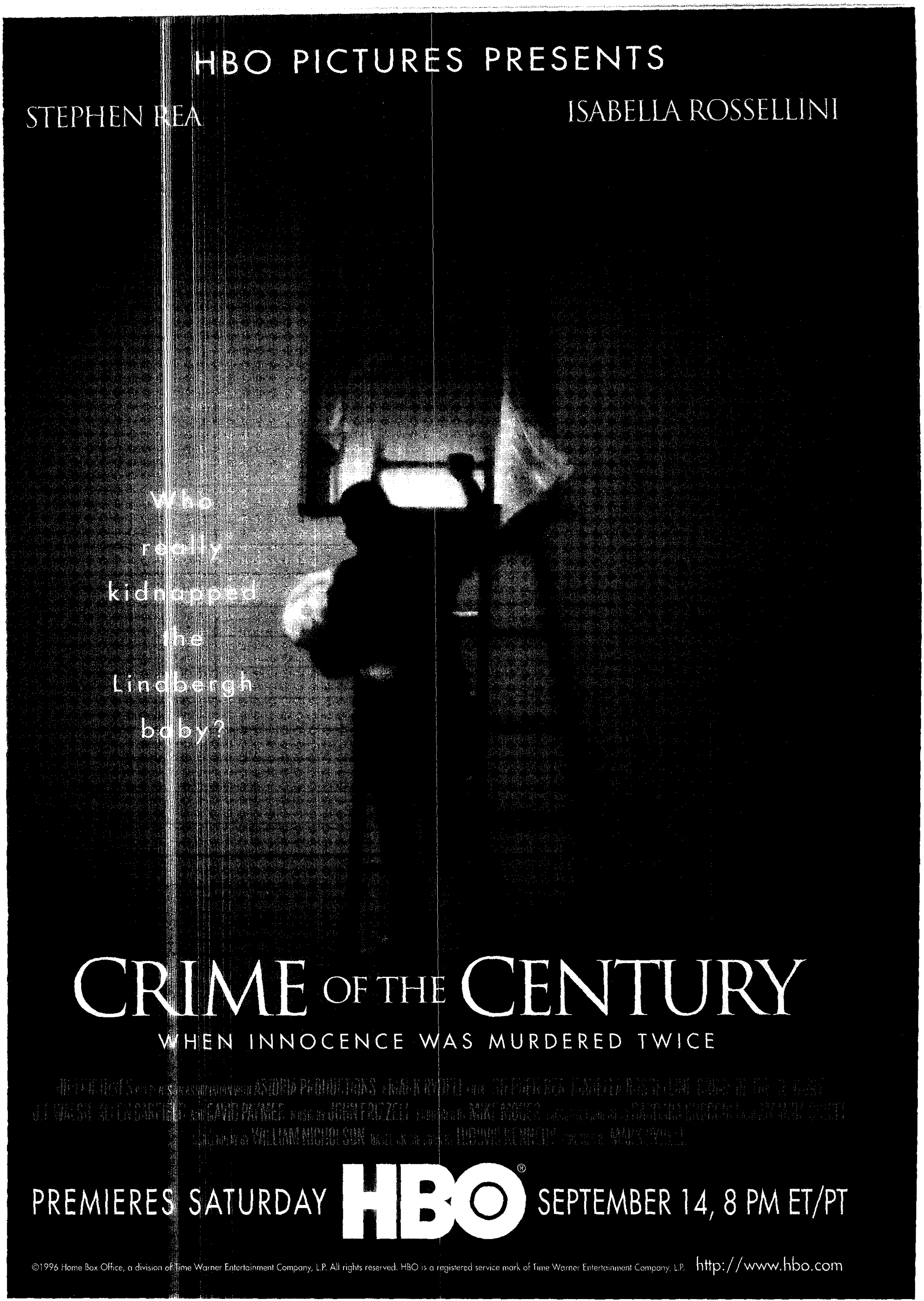
DANCE

"Pasión Gitana"—Born in Córdoba, raised by a gypsy grandfather, trained in flamenco by an uncle, schooled in ballet at the Spanish National Ballet Company, the twenty-seven-year-old Joaquín Cortés has the dark good looks and the premier-danseur discipline that it takes to pull off an evening of percussive smoldering. When "Gypsy Passion," his showcase, closed the Spoleto Festival last year, his Mephistophelian virility did not escape the notice of the Italian press. ("He doesn't smoke. He doesn't drink. He has only one vice," the Italian edition of *Glamour* cooed. "*Le donne.*") This Friday, Cortés and his fourteen-member company arrive in New York to present the American début of the flashy and frequently shirtless style of dance he calls "*fusión flamenca*," a mixture of ballet and flamenco (imagine a passage of hammer-and-anvil footwork ending with an equally complex series of pirouettes) which has generated considerable éclat for Cortés. Giorgio Armani, among others, was quick to offer his talents to the production, even though it meant that the master of the unconstructed suit had to come up with something in a black velvet stretch pant. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Sept. 13 at 8.)

Trisha Brown Company—The choreographer presents a preview of her October B.A.M. season. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Sept. 11 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Brand New Dance—Guta Hedewig and the School of Hard Knocks dance collective curate an evening of works in progress: Alexandra Hartmann and Johanna S. Meyer in "Dish," a duet about menu choices and personal crises; Melanie Kloetzel in "The Goodbye Trip," a solo that takes the motions of the hips as metaphors for emotional surrender; Annie Lanzillotto in selections from "Arthur Avenue Retail Market," her fruit-stall opera; and Tokyo native Yukio Shinozaki in "Ecdysis," her comparison of the metamorphoses within puberty and the cocoon. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. Sept. 12 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Pilar Rioja—This commanding figure in traditional Spanish dance appears in her twenty-fourth New York season. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 11 and Sept. 17 at 7, Sept. 12-13 at 8, and Sept. 15 at 3. Through Sept. 22.)



HBO PICTURES PRESENTS

STEPHEN REA

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

Who
really
kidnapped
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baby?

CRIME OF THE CENTURY

WHEN INNOCENCE WAS MURDERED TWICE

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

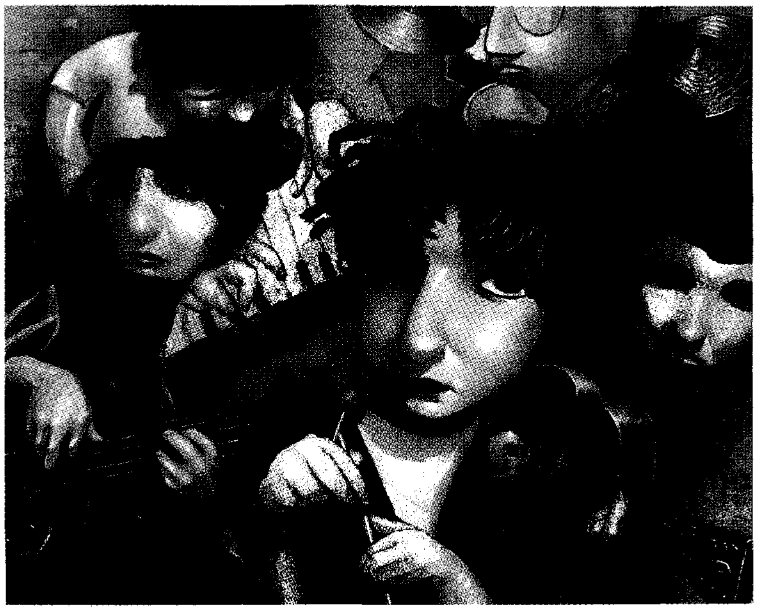
B. B. King / The Neville Brothers / Delbert McClinton—It's billed as a blues festival, but the latter two acts transcend the genre and King practically invented it. Almost fifty years after his first record, the big man still packs more wallop into one carefully chosen note than a horde of fleet-fingered guitarists could do with a thousand. Brother Aaron may have sold his soul to the soft-rock devil, but when he returns to the Neville Brothers his heavenly voice soars over shape-shifting New Orleans grooves. And the raucous West Texas singer Delbert McClinton has remained, over the course of a long, meandering career, an uncategorizable treasure; call him a homegrown Van Morrison. With blues-guitar phenom Kenny Wayne Shepherd. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Sept. 11 at 8.)

Me'shell Ndegeocello—A bisexual, bass-playing, seventies-channelling dynamo whose songs are always in the key of life. "Plantation Lullabies," her excellent début, elegantly fused R. & B., funk, and pop the way Stevie Wonder used to. Her followup, "Peace Beyond Passion," asks tough questions about blind faith and its consequences; in a move that's got radio programmers shuddering, her recent single, "Leviticus: Faggot," graphically details the struggle of a young gay boy. (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 307-7171. Sept. 11 at 8.)

Julio Iglesias—A great favorite of the Reagans, this internationally handsome singing sensation is reputed to have sold more recordings in more languages than any other musical artist in the world. The explanation may have something to do with his perpetual tan, his expensive suits, his fine manners, and his ability to sing over-orchestrated love ballads to legions of adoring (mostly female) fans. (Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800. Sept. 12 at 8.)

David Bowie—Last September, Bowie gave the keynote address at a college-rock conference at Lincoln Center, and the house was two-thirds full. The forty-nine-year-old rock god hasn't had a top-ten hit since "Let's Dance," in 1983, or a truly influential album since "Scary Monsters"—the last of his great collaborations with Brian Eno—in 1980. Less than a year after the release of "Outside," his twenty-fourth record, he's nowhere to be found on *Billboard's* Top Two Hundred list. These days, the Thin White Duke seems to be doing his best work on the screen—vide his campy impersonation of Andy Warhol in "Basquiat." But a college-rock conference is an appropriate setting for Bowie the musician: his awesome back catalogue has given rise to a whole new crop of bands making some of the finest pop around (even when it's transparently derivative). Suede, Oasis, Pulp, Blur, and Spacehog are just a few of the young dudes weaned on "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" and "Diamond Dogs." Though "Outside" was touted as the return of Eno, the sonic guru's work with everyone from U2 to Pavarotti seems to have diluted his creativity—apart from a few spooky new sounds, it was another sporadically inspired album. Bowie's last tour featured the galvanizing presence of Nine Inch Nails, and it almost seemed as if the double bill was conceived as a passing of some generational torch. Still, it would be a mistake to write off such an original talent. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 14 at 8.)

The Cure—Best known for the smudged red lipstick and bird's-nest coif of its leader, Robert Smith, the Cure has gone in its seventeen years together from alternative mope rockers to arena-packing titans. Much of the English band's success has to do with Smith's distinctive voice, a playful feline hiccup that makes his gift for gloom sort of charming. The band is also sensationally versatile: "Wild Mood Swings," the group's latest effort finds Smith punctuating his standard minor-key drones with mariachi references and funky wa-wa guitar work. (Radio City Music Hall. Sept. 16-17 at 8.)



The Cure, at Radio City Music Hall.

Smashing Pumpkins / Grant Lee Buffalo—On their meticulously crafted mammoth double album, "Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness," these Chicago misfits create a dense, sprawling sound that draws on rock and roll's richest mineral deposits, with traces of Pink Floyd, Cheap Trick, and Led Zeppelin and a lode of New Wave. It's a monster of a record; the only thing that's bigger is the ego of chief Pumpkinhead Billy Corgan. / Grant Lee Buffalo is the brainchild of Grant Lee Phillips, a guitarist and singer who is one of the canniest (and most indefinable) new songwriters in rock. Michael Stipe called the band's 1993 début, "Fuzzy," the "best record of the year—hands down." (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Sept. 17 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**HADDA BROOKS** is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 15: the **PHIL WOODS** quintet and the **PAT MARTINO** quartet. Forty years down the line, Woods still breathes bop. The alto saxophonist, who speaks fluent Parker but has his own relaxed and ripely romantic take on the music, is playing better than ever. Pop fans who are aware that Woods is responsible for the sax breaks on Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are" and Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years" may want to catch this engagement to see what he can do in front of a smart modern band. Martino, the quintessential guitarist's guitarist, has won the admiration of three generations of jazz fretmen (and the late Jerry Garcia). He knows how to transform knowledge, technique, and ideas into genuine music—a notion lost on a lot of guitar manglers. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Sept. 14: the **GEORGE CABLES** trio. Back in the seventies, this pianist was dubbed "Mr. Beautiful" by the legendary saxophonist Art Pepper, his boss at the time. The name probably had something to do with his finesse and tasteful aggressiveness. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, starting Sept. 17, the great **BARBARA COOK**. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** plays the American popular music of the twenties through the forties.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 15: the **MARCUS PRINTUP** quintet. Another bright young trumpeter who's done his homework, Printup is evolving into an assured stylist. He's no Wynton, but what's life without a dream? Starting Sept. 17: **KENNY BARRON** and **CHARLIE HADEN,** two musicians with one thing on their minds—pure lyricism. Barron's offhand virtuoso piano and Haden's all-heart bass balance each other beautifully, as the two made perfectly clear on Barron's masterful 1995 album, "Wanton Spirit." Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 12-14: **JOE LOVANO.** His fortieth birthday may be history, but despite this unfashionable circumstance, there isn't a more satisfying saxophonist on the scene. Lovano knows his history but isn't one to shackle himself with a self-imposed conservatism: in his world, it's possible to love Ornette Coleman as much as you do Stan Getz. He revels in openhearted swing, but he's willing to bust open tone and harmony when passion dictates. His intensity on up-tempo numbers gives way to an equally powerful romantic density on ballads. Sept. 17: The **DAVE HOLLAND** quartet. What is Holland's greatest gift—his extraordinary talent for the bass or his knack for assembling first-rate bands? He's kept his mind open—fashionable neoclassicism may hold no interest for him, but relentless swinging still does—and he comes to New York far too rarely for a certified jazz titan.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Vocalist **FAITH PRINCE** is the star-in-residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow

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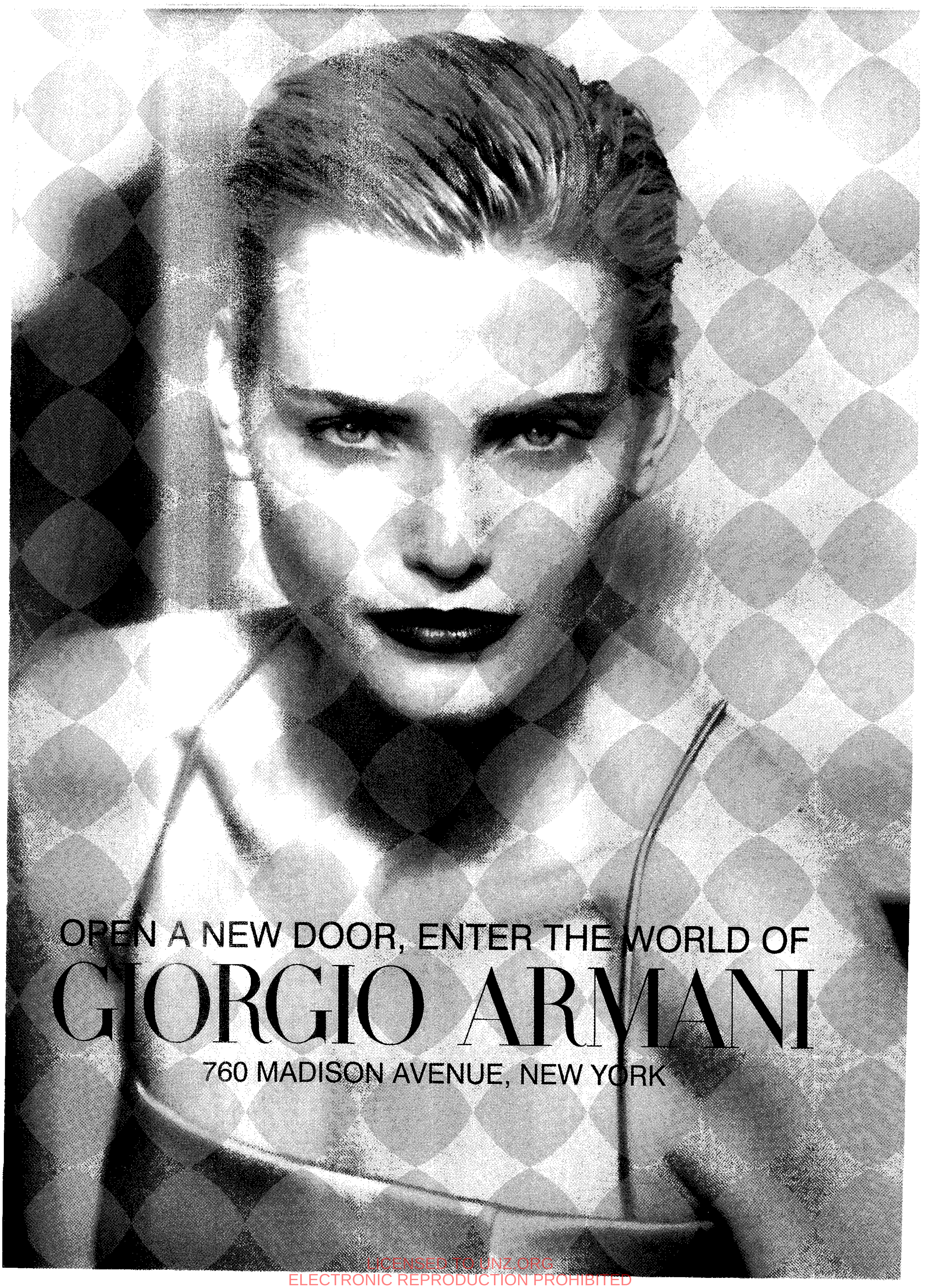
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Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—The **CHICO FREEMAN** quartet gets the call starting Sept. 17. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—Steve Ross and Judy Carmichael are your hosts through Sept. 15. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 17: The **CHARLIE HUNTER** quartet. Thanks to his custom-built eight-string guitar and a few choice effects, Hunter can save himself the expense of a bassist and an organ player. But, while it's a kick to hear this young talent create sounds last heard in the mid-sixties (on, say, a Big John Patton organ-trio disk), the only way he's ever going to transcend novelty is to stop jamming and get down to some serious compositional business.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 15: the **RON CARTER** quintet. Few can touch Carter on the bass, and even fewer can come close on the piccolo bass, a high-pitched mutant instrument that the master trots out for his own gigs. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Sept. 14: piano, guitar, and bass with John Bunch, Harry Allen, and Michael Moore. Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 15: The **KELLEY DEAL 6000.** Recently sprung from rehab after a well-publicized heroin bust, Kelley (twin sister of Kim from the Breeders) has returned with a great collection of unwieldy hooks called "Go to the Sugar Altar." Pretty good for a musician who was still a novice guitarist when she quit her day job three years ago.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—The **WILD COLONIALS** (every Wednesday in September) are the salonistes of the L.A. music scene. Dr. John, Cyndi Lauper, and Rickie Lee Jones are among the guests on the band's new album, "This Can't Be Life," which is driven by Angela McCluskey's heartfelt honey-and-hot-sauce vocals. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city. Sept. 12-14: **THE FLYING NEUTRINOS.** This itinerant New Orleans jazz band—its members grew up on the Big Easy's streets, took a brief detour through Europe, and wound up adrift in the East River on a homemade paddleboat—is a family affair. Cousins Ingrid Lucia, twenty-five, and Todd Lundagin, twenty, lead the group: Lucia's sassy patter and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's, and wonder boy Todd plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-like voice.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 12: **MAN . . . OR ASTRO-MAN?** These space-age stowaways from Alabama play lo-fi surf punctuated with sci-fi samples from the fifties; they are rumored to tour with a theremin and a six-foot-tall Tesla coil. Drag racing, double agents, and interplanetary travel are among the many issues musically addressed in their instrumentals. Sept. 17: A benefit for the Workhouse Theatre company, featuring music by Lisa Loeb and the Rakes Progress and an appearance by thespian-about-town Ethan Hawke.

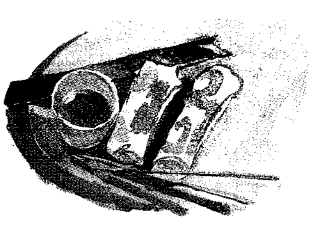
Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Sept. 11: The **DIRTY THREE.** Ever since John Cale set off thunderous squalls with his viola in the Velvet Underground, rock and roll made on anything other than a guitar has been intriguing. This Australian instrumental trio picks up where Cale left off. In concert, as on the group's captivating new disk, "Horse Stories," the electric violin stabs the music like a matador. Sept. 12: **HELIUM.** Led by Mary Timony, whose high, breathy voice may have given rise to the band's name, Helium offers surprisingly angular alternative rock.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 11: The **GIGOLO AUNTS.** This Boston combo has been flirting with darker material lately, but you can always count on them for tight harmonies and solid jangle-pop. With **THE OCEAN BLUE.** Sept. 13-14: **FRENTE.** Sept. 16-17: **LOW.** This Duluth trio specializes in high-impact emotion without histrionics (a guitar solo is usually just a methodically strummed single note). On their fine new disk, "The Curtain Hits the Cast," their minimalistic approach speaks volumes. Listening to Low makes you feel drugged.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

GOOD EVENING, VIETNAM



CHRIS CURRY

Something strange is happening on the Upper West Side—suddenly, there are some pretty good places to eat. And not just the usual pasta-primavera joints: the current boomlet is Southeast Asian, chiefly Vietnamese. This is good news for several reasons. First of all, Vietnamese food is wonderfully sophisticated, with all sorts of sparky flavors (mint, lime, ginger, peanut). And it's ideal for the neighborhood's fussy eaters, because it's clean-tasting and light. It's usually not insanely expensive. It's usually served in pleasant but not formal places, nice enough to call for a clean shirt but not so nice that dinner feels like an event. The Upper West Side—no, the world—could use more places like that.

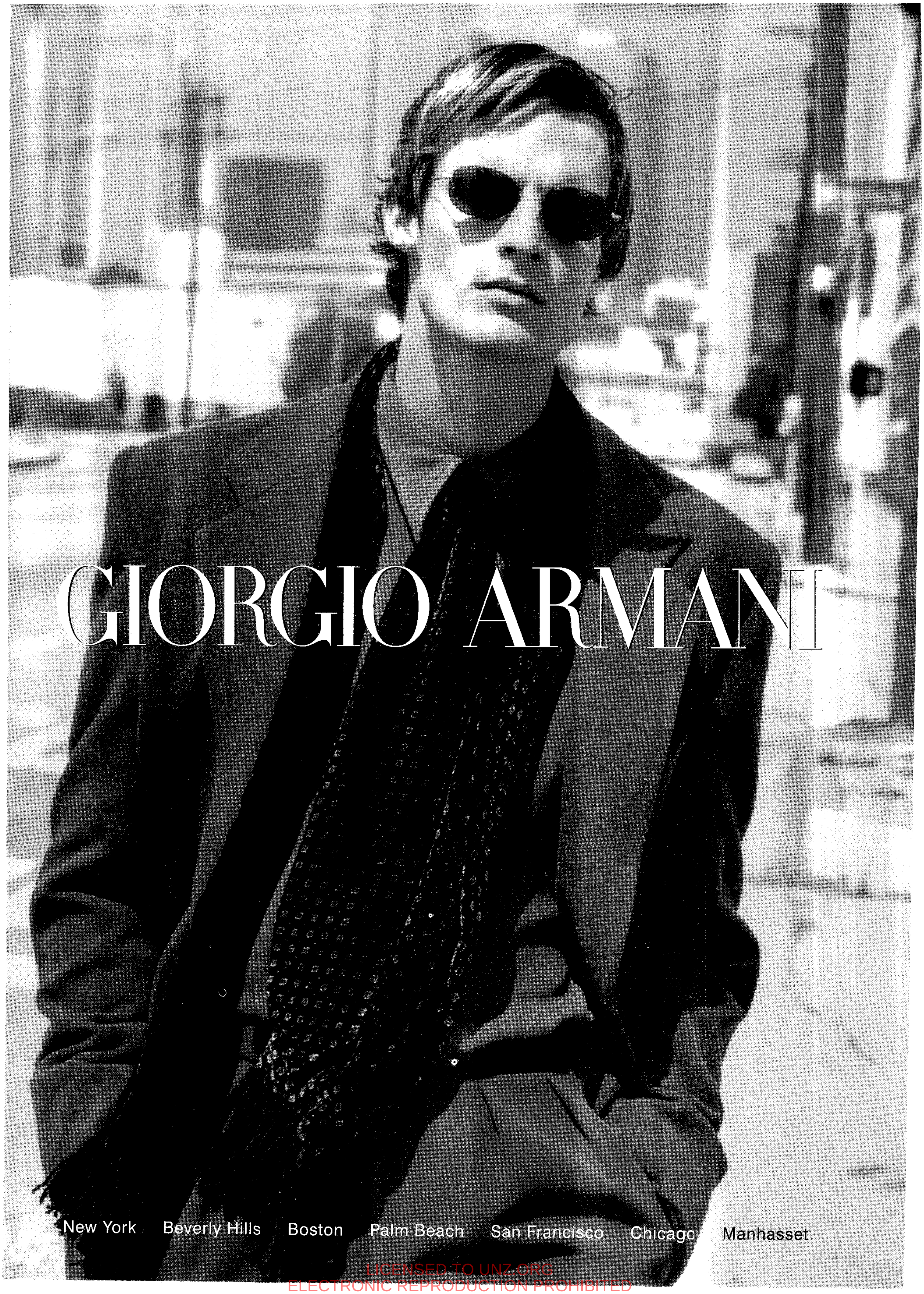
Monsoon, 435 Amsterdam Ave., at 81st St. (580-8686)—The trailblazer can be maddeningly clattery and uncomfortably packed, especially because of the tiny foyer and the open kitchen, but it's a nice-looking place. The dishes that are done well are really reliable, and most of them have an authenticity you miss when a Vietnamese chef is trying to cook what he thinks an American would want. The *goi muc* (a salad of squid, basil, and cucumber dressed with lime and ginger) is especially good, and there isn't a bad appetizer in the bunch. The entrées are less thrilling, but there are still plenty of worthy ones. The *ga nuong xa* (grilled chicken marinated in lime and lemongrass, served with sticky rice oozing coconut milk), for instance, may sound pedestrian, but it's not—it's a simple dish that lets you taste the characteristic flavors of the cuisine without sauce getting in the way. The portions are smallish, so order a lot; anyway, the leftovers aren't a bad breakfast.

River, 345 Amsterdam Ave., at 76th St. (579-1888)—If Saigon had a singles bar (well, it *probably* has had one or two), it might be a little like River. This good-sized but weirdly shaped restaurant has a too-large bar, overly chirpy American servers, and more bamboo on the walls than is really necessary, but, these quibbles aside, you can get a good dinner if you pick and choose. The *banh hoi* (a tangle of soft angel-hair noodles sprinkled with scallions, shallots, and peanuts and topped with the protein of your choice) is luscious—it's tempting to get two orders and call it a night. The shredded papaya salad is good, too; so are the summer rolls (bean sprouts, lettuce, a couple of shrimp, and rice vermicelli, bundled in rice paper) and the spring rolls (summer rolls turned deliciously evil by deep-frying). But many dishes, especially entrées, are indistinct and Chineseified. You can avoid them by checking the menu for code words like "pineapple" and "baby corn."

Pho Bang, 102 W. 86th St. (579-9696)—Thank goodness for the human impulse to overcompensate. The downtown Pho Bang is famously dreary; the new uptown restaurant is lovely. It was months in the making, as murals were fussed over and tables were finished and refinished and the woodwork was given fanatical attention. The menu has made the trip north more or less unchanged. The appetizers are great (the summer and spring rolls may be the tastiest in the neighborhood), the barbecue-at-your-table is great, and the sesame beef or grilled shrimp with angel-hair noodles is great. But that's pretty much the menu. (Why? You *know* the chef doesn't restrict his own dinner to one of these things every night.) If you hate assembling your meal, don't do the table barbecue—you have to grill your meat choice, and then make a little stack of condiments for it, and then wrap the whole thing in lettuce, and then, at last, eat—but if you like to cook, you're in for a treat. Be warned, though, that the little tables are barely any bigger than the tabletop grill, so you have to contort to keep from knocking things off.

Saigon Grill, 2381 Broadway, at 87th St. (875-9072)—Nothing about this place looks very promising—not the former-Greek-coffee-shop setting, not the cheesy signs in the windows, and definitely not the take-out menus, which are practically the membership badges of the bad-restaurants club. Well, forget all that: the food is terrific. The big menu has lots of highlights—a spicy calamari salad and a salad of chicken and cabbage and peanuts, both of which sparkle; great summer and spring rolls; and none of the usual entrée disappointment. The descriptions on the menu sound ordinary or even lousy (many mentions of bell peppers and "tasty sauce"), but the dishes come out streamlined, strongly flavored, and beautiful. All the lemongrass dishes are wonderful, and the seafood choices are many and interesting, including a Vietnamese bouillabaisse, a whole crispy fish, and prawns prepared every which way. Everyone is so delighted with the food that the general air of happiness more than makes up for the place's so-so looks.

Rain, 100 W. 82nd St. (501-0776)—What to make of Rain? It's a gigantic partitioned room with high prices and a cocktail lounge and light jazz on the sound system and waiters with snippy attitudes—hey, it's like a good old-fashioned annoying Upper West Side restaurant! But it was part of the neighborhood's Southeast Asian new wave, and it's useful to have a fancy Southeast Asian joint around; after all, you need somewhere nice to celebrate birthdays and first dates and visits from parents. Besides, the food—largely Thai in concept, with a lot of Vietnamese inspiration—is delicious and imaginative. At night there's grilled marinated sirloin with chili dip and salmon with pepper and garlic wrapped in a banana leaf; at lunch, a prawns-and-jicama salad. This is not food from the old country so much as food being prepared by someone from the old country who's got modern flair, and it's good enough to outweigh the less delightful qualities of the place. If you go early or late, you can avoid the bar scene, and you'll find the petulant waiters in slightly better moods.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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Winslow Homer," a comprehensive survey of the painter's career, comprising nearly two hundred paintings, watercolors, and drawings. The exhibition is sumptuous, deeply satisfying, and well balanced, and it reveals unsuspected depths in Homer's art. Yet the images that will stay with you are the stout-hearted mountain guides, the bashful adolescent lovers, the daydreaming schoolteacher oblivious of her pupils' innocent games under cloudless skies. Was America ever really such an idyllic place? The dark edges are there (some of the seascapes are truly terrifying), but the overwhelming impression is of a defiantly hopeful spirit; even the early, reportorial Civil War paintings emphasize the camaraderie and bravery of the soldiers rather than their suffering. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Toulouse-Lautrec." Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ "Two by Two," in the Costume Institute, presents fifty fashion ensembles in male and female pairs, from the early eighteenth century to 1970. Through Nov. 24. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden is open (weather permitting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). Through Oct. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation" includes a hundred and thirty paintings, and nearly as many works on paper, depicting lovers, wives, poets, art dealers, and children. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ "Pictures of the Times: A Century of Prints from the New York *Times*." Through Oct. 1. (For the run of the Picasso show, the museum's hours are Saturdays through Mondays, 9:30 to 6; Tuesdays, 11 to 6; and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30. Timed-entry tickets to Picasso are available in the lobby and through Ticketmaster, at 307-4545.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Africa: The Art of a Continent." This exhibition is bound to infuriate both scholars and ideologues with the manner in which it collapses historical, ethnographic, and aesthetic distinctions between diverse cultures (imagine an exhibition titled "Europe: The Art of a Continent"). In presenting the predominantly Islamic arts of Northern Africa, the antiquities of Egypt, and the many different cultures of sub-Saharan Africa all at once, the curators seem to propound two overlapping but not particularly cogent ideological agendas: a celebratory Pan-Africanism on the one hand and a "Family of Man" group hug on the other. That said, the show is still a must-see for its rich selection of resplendent objects. And the catalogue is filled with excellent essays by renowned scholars of the new black studies. Through Sept. 25. . . . ¶ "In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present." The first exhibition of this scope on this topic in New York includes work by twenty-eight artists, from forties studio portraits by Salla Casset and Seydou Keita to more personal and experimental photographs from the eighties and nineties by Santu Mofokeng, Gordon Bleach, Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, and Mody Sory Diallo. One section of the show features pictures published in *Drum*, the influential magazine founded in South Africa in 1951 and subsequently published in Nigeria, Ghana, and East and Central Africa as well. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Meret Oppenheim: Beyond the Teacup." Through Oct. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"NYNY: City of Ambition." The perfect summer show, an anthology of twentieth-century images of New York drawn mostly from the permanent collection, presented in an installation as bold, entertaining, and aggressive as the city itself. The emphasis is on photography, from the lavender majesty of Steichen's nocturnes to the gritty realism of Weegee, but some favorite paintings are dusted off as well: Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, and Joseph Stella are among those well represented. The architectural models of the Empire State Building (in carved plaster) and Rockefeller Center (in finely detailed wood) are fascinating—but why is a cocktail dress draped over Mies van der Rohe's model of the Seagram Building? Through Oct. 27. . . . ¶ "Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West," a subdued, library-style exhibit of books and prints from 1848 to the present, which makes up in substance for what it lacks in fire. Most of the landmark photographic books on the subject are here—competing railroad reports illustrated by Alexander Gardner and A. J. Russell; mammoth survey albums that include works by Timothy O'Sullivan, Carleton Watkins, and William Henry Jackson; "An American Exodus," the searing Dust Bowl record by Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor; "From the Missouri West," Robert Adams's complex revisioning of the land. And the prints are delightful. One O'Sullivan photograph details velvety black outcroppings of columnar basalt lining a volcanic ridge; in an exquisitely toned picture by Laura Gilpin, a powerful storm sweeps over the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Other well-chosen works come from Frederick Sommer, Edward Weston, Eliot Porter, Ansel Adams, Lewis Baltz, Mark Klett, Richard Misrach, and Mary Peck. The show ends with a coda of six prints by Lee Friedlander, who has recently trained his mercurial eye on the Sonoran Desert. His severe portraits of trees and brush are impenetrable thickets that seem to say that nothing about this terrain is clear anymore, that the road from here will be unlike anything we can imagine. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "An American Story," a survey of twentieth-century paintings and sculptures, both well known and obscure, from the museum's collection. Through Oct. 6. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

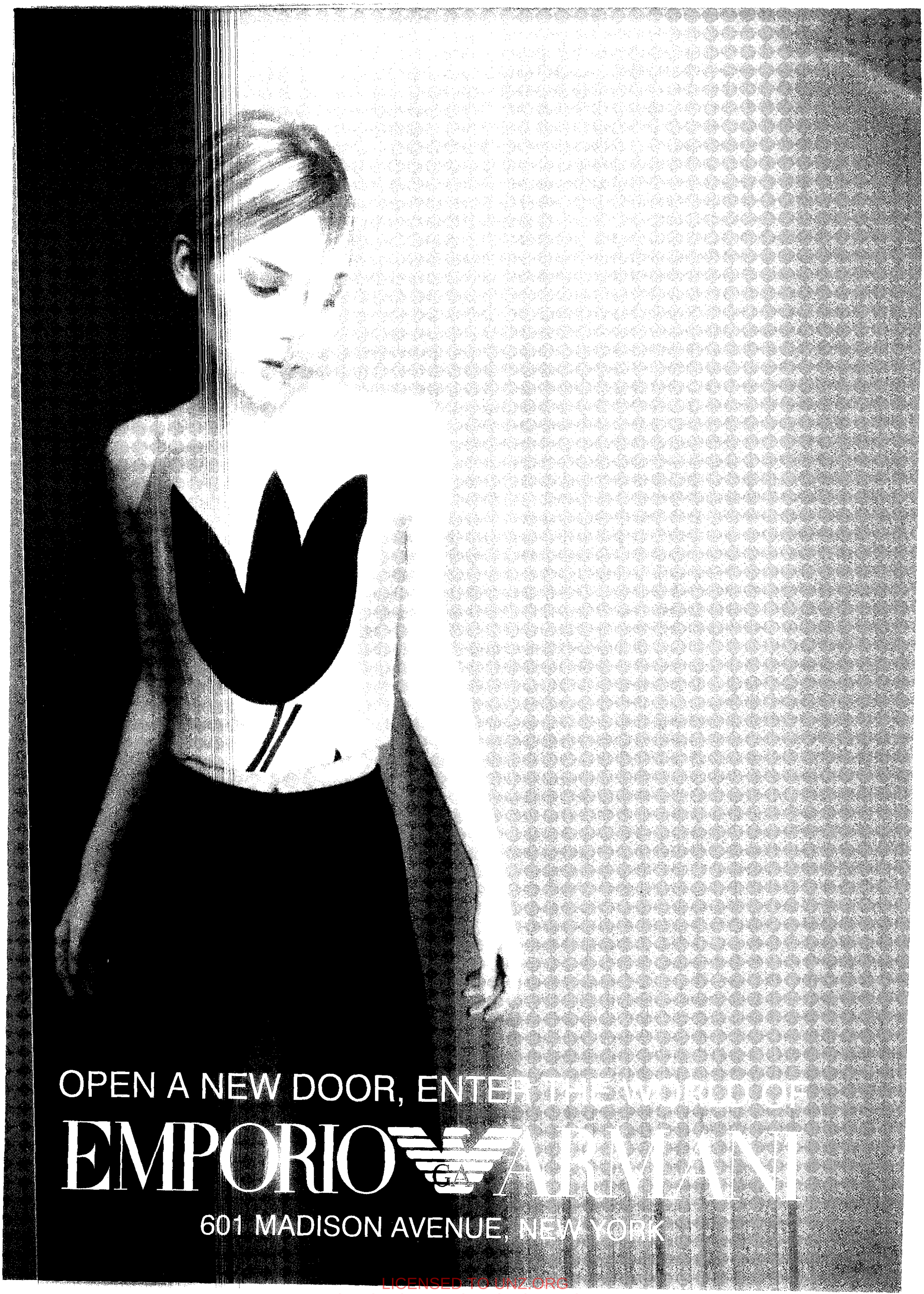
American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Okavango: Africa's Last Eden," thirty large color photographs by Frans Lanting, of the wildlife of the Okavango Delta, in Botswana. . . . ¶ Paintings and drawings by the American naturalist Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885). . . . ¶ An exhibition that explores the relationship between scientific research and its presentation in the media—specifically, the *Times*. Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ The Hall of Vertebrate Origins has reopened, its dropped ceiling removed to reveal Calvert Vaux's skylit design. All the better to see the dunkleosteus, a sixteen-foot-long hanging model of an armored fish, with self-sharpening jawbones, based on a four-foot-long fossil of its head. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Breaking Barriers: Recent American Craft," a wide range of works by such artists as Jean Williams Cacicedo (large felt coats), Viola Frey (painted ceramic figures), Albert Paley (bent-steel furniture), and Jane Sauer (fibre sculptures). Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ Patrick Dougherty's "Crossing Over," a large, vortexlike sculpture made from intertwined saplings and branches. Through Oct. 13. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera." The Nazi occupation of the Netherlands is best known to most of us through Anne Frank's diary, but another secret record of the era was made by Dutch photographers, both professional and amateur; a selection of their work has been gathered in this stunning exhibition. They risked everything to document the events that were transforming their peaceable nation into hell, pointing their cameras out windows, to record the occupiers tramping down their streets and pillaging their homes, and inward, to capture the hidden life of the Jews and resistance fighters who faced constant danger. Their surreptitiousness gives the pictures a chilling immediacy: angles tilt crazily, focus wavers, and in a few shots ghost images from a room are reflected on the window through which the lens is aimed. An awful sense of the enigmatic creeps in. A group of gray, faceless men in dark suits are being shepherded down the street by German soldiers—where are they going? We don't know, and we sense that our worst surmise may fall short of the mark. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ "From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800" presents two hundred and seventy paintings, sculptures, illuminated manuscripts, and ceremonial objects that tell the story of Jewish appointed officials—diplomats, financiers, minters, arms purveyors, art dealers—in the Germanic courts of Europe. Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"'alt.youth.media'" is a bunch of interactive rec rooms full of E-zines, print zines, CD-ROMs, short videos, and d.j. audio mixes. Free headphones are provided. Slammin'.

DANIEL MAIA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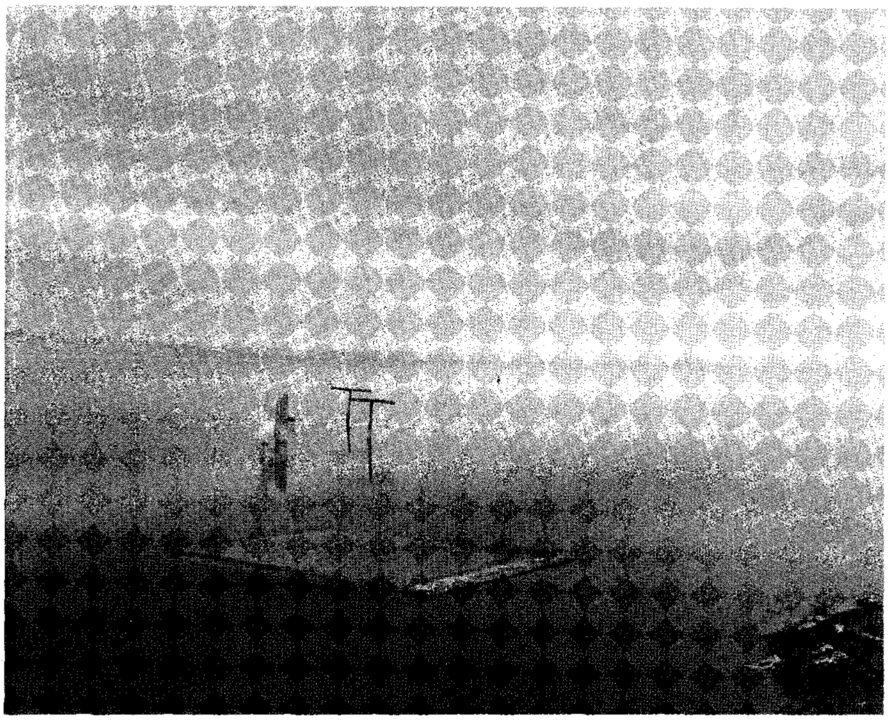

RICHARD MISRACH: *Two shows from his "Desert Cantos," at Curt Marcus (578 Broadway; through October 5) and Robert Mann (42 East 76th Street; opens September 11). Above: "Salton Sea (Dead Fish), 1983."*

COURTESY ROBERT MANN GALLERY

Desert Chronicle—Digging around in the arid West for nearly two decades, Misrach has become our most perceptive cultural archeologist. The often stunning color prints in the eighteen series that he calls "Desert Cantos" overflow with echoes of history and signs of human folly, as well as with hard evidence of man's defilement of the earth. Seventeen contemplative selections from the "Cantos" form a strong installation at Mann. A bright view of the foothills around a sliver of Lake Mead seems serene enough, until the odd atmosphere forces you to recall that the lake is really a reservoir and didn't exist before the completion of Hoover Dam, in 1936. From that point, notions of flood control, irrigation, and power take over. "Rocky Flats Mesa, Colorado" is a defiantly symmetrical image of yellow prairie grass, a low barbed-wire fence, and a single tree, dead center, in the distance; the sense of foreboding is immediate, and the accompanying text explains just how hazardous this nuclear-weapons-manufacturing site really is. More cerebral fare is on view at Curt Marcus, where works from two of the "Cantos" hang on either side of the gallery, mirroring each other. "The Playboys" consists of closeups of *Playboy* pages—pinups, advertisements, and cartoons, all strafed with bullet holes—that the photographer happened on at a desert shooting range; "The Paintings" is a series of details from paintings (by Goya, Géricault, Bierstadt, and others) in museums in Western states. The charged issues in both are violence, oppression, and cultural values—adroitly explored and, again, painfully seductive. Misrach's best photographs use beauty more as a rhetorical tool than as an aesthetic end: like the eloquence of a great speech, beauty unifies the elements of his pictures—politics, popular culture, land abuse—into seamless, potent exhortations. (Several of the photographer's more confrontational pieces, shot at the Bravo 20 bombing range, in Nevada, are still on view in "Perpetual Mirage," at the Whitney, through Sept. 22.)

Through Nov. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 6. . . . **Note:** For the run of this show, admission is free to visitors 21 and under.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—"Privy to History" features artifacts, photographs, and documents relating to an excavated eighteen-seventies outhouse that belonged to an Irish family on Broome Street. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ Photographs, prints, furniture, books, and other objects are on view in "Becoming Eleanor Roosevelt: The New York Years, 1884-1933." Through Nov. 24. . . . ¶ Seven Louis Comfort Tiffany lamps are on display, along with a few other Tiffany objects, a Tiffany oil painting of the Palisades, and photographs of interiors he designed and of his workshops. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ "July 9, 1776: New York's Independence Day." A show of documents, paintings, guns, and other memorabilia chronicling the day on which New York, the only colony to have abstained from ratifying the Declaration of Independence five days earlier, finally committed itself to open rebellion. (Its fears were well founded: Washington lost New York in September, and the city was occupied by the British for the duration of the war.) Through Sept. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Part II of "The Hand of the Poet" presents original manuscripts by the likes of Cummings, Moore, Merrill, Auden, Bishop, Lowell, Moss, Nabokov, and Sexton. . . . ¶ "Headlines, Deadlines, Bylines: The New York *Times* Morgue, 1896-1996." Through Oct. 18. . . . ¶ A rotating selection of drawings by Charles Addams, most of which appeared in these pages. Through Jan. 25. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. Its names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6. Through Oct. 31.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"Ceremony and Spirit: Nature and Memory in Contemporary Latino Art," an exhibit of paintings and mixed-medium installations by sixteen artists, among them Josely Carvalho, George Crespo, Ester Hernandez, Frank Lopez-Motnyk, Pepón Osorio, and Regina Vater. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ This year's artists-in-residence show, titled ". . . To Carry Me Home," features a relief sculpture by Chakaia Booker, a painting by Richard Lewis, and a sculptural installation by Michael Richards. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ "The Listening Sky," an installation of works in the museum's sculpture garden, has been extended through Oct. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St.—"The Fragrance of Ink: Korean Literati Paintings of the Choson Dynasty (1392-1920)," a travelling exhibition of sixty-two scrolls, album leaves, fans, and screens from Korea University, in Seoul. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Bicycles: History, Beauty, Fantasy"—An appreciation of the bike's evolution from 1817 to 1920, including examples of the Phantom velocipede (the first bicycle with a rubber tire), the Ariel (the first manufactured high-wheeler), and the Old Hickory Ladies' Model (made from sixteen plies of laminated second-growth hickory). Through Oct. 4. (Paine-Webber Building, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 8 to 6.)

Season Openers—**HELEN BERGGRUEN** and **THOMAS PAQUETTE,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. Both open Sept. 12. . . . **JAKE BERTHOT** and **HARVEY QUAYTMAN,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Both shows through Oct. 1. . . . **ALAN BRAY,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. Through Sept. 28. . . . **LEONARDO DREW,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **AARON HARRY GORSON,** Spanierman, 45 E. 58th St. Through Sept. 28. . . . **LESTER JOHNSON,** Cadé, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **ALAN KLEIMAN,** O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 12. . . **YAYOI KUSAMA,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **MARK PODWAL,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Opens Sept. 11. . . . **ALEXANDER RODCHENKO AND VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 31. . . . **JOHN RUSKIN,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through Sept. 28. . . . **DAVID SMITH,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **PETER SULLIVAN,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **ANTON VAN DALEN,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. Through Oct. 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"Sculpture"—Crudely formed plaster-and-papier-mâché sculptures by Donald Baechler, akin to his childlike paintings; a little whitewashed house from Konstantin Kakanias, the interior lit by votive candles and painted with wild scenes of sexual license; and a small wood table supporting discarded airplane parts, by Nancy Rubins. Through Sept. 21. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St.)

"Shopping"—The transformation of SoHo into a tourism-and-shopping Mecca, along with the rise of the Chelsea galleries, has brought the neighborhood's preëminence as a place for

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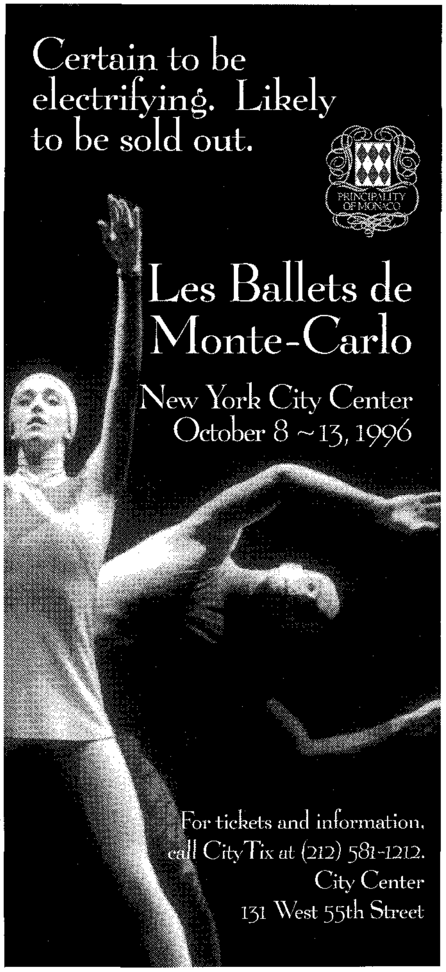
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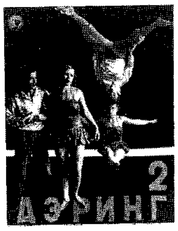
2 Daring, one of four Constructivist collages of the Russian Circus, late 1920s.

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viewing contemporary art into question. In last month's "SoHo So Long" (at American Fine Arts), the artists' collaborative AC2K examined the district's possible demise as an art center in a clever, trenchant way. The artists in "Shopping," by contrast, try to put a positive spin on the phenomenon by envisioning a still vital (albeit radically different) role for art in SoHo, both colluding with and rebelling against the green slime of ordinary commerce. The show is really an informal walking tour, with art installed in a wide variety of restaurants, hairdressing salons, and shops. And "wide" is no exaggeration: while Vanessa Beecroft colonizes the ultra-chic Miu Miu store (100 Prince St.) and Jane Kaplowitz invades the Kate Spade handbag emporium (59 Thompson St.), Jim Anderson has taken his video "XXX Dolly" to the twenty-four-hour peep-show booths at West Video (375 Canal St., at West Broadway), on the raw fringes of the neighborhood. Through Sept. 21. (For more information, call Deitch Projects at 343-7300.)

SEASON OPENERS—**POLLY APFELBAUM**, Boesky & Callery, 51 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **ROBERT CUMMING**, Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **KATHLEEN GILJE**, Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **MICHAEL GREGORY**, Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. Through Oct. 16. . . . **PETER HRISTOFF**, Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **MARTIN KERSELS**, Gorney, 100 Greene St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **PAUL MC CARTHY**, Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **WALTER MARTIN AND PALOMA MUÑOZ**, P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through Oct. 5. . . . **ALIX PEARLSTEIN**, Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **LUCIO POZZI** and **SUSANNA RUBIN**, Weber, 142 Greene St. Both open Sept. 14. . . . **FRED SANDBACK**, Markey, 55 Vandam St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **PATH SOONG**, June Kelly, 591 Broadway. Through Oct. 1. . . . **DAVID STERN**, Rosenberg and Kaufman, 115 Wooster St. Opens Sept. 11. . . . **RUDI TRÖGER**, Nolan/Eckman, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

DOYLE'S—An auction of nineteenth- and twentieth-century decorative arts includes Lalique glassware, a collection of Edwardian satinwood furniture, and a variety of French, British, German, Italian, and American paintings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Sept. 11 at 10.)

SWANN'S—An auction of books about art and architecture. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Sept. 12 at 10:30.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

RICHARD MISRACH—Two shows. (See page 22.) (Marcus, 578 Broadway; through Oct. 5. Mann, 42 E. 76th St.; opens Sept. 11.)

"GAMES PEOPLE PLAY"—A hundred years of images from the New York City Parks Department's photo archives: nineteenth-century croquet matches, latter-day hoops, a 1968 giant-Tinkertoy fest, fedoraed checkers players in 1934. Through Sept. 13. (Arsenal Gallery, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. Open weekdays 9 to 4:30.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Landscapes of the Civil War." Selections from the five thousand recently discovered albumen prints in the collection of the Medford (Massachusetts) Historical Society. Through Nov. 10. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"CHIM: The Photographs of David Seymour," a retrospective of works by one of the founders of Magnum Photos. Included are images of the Spanish Civil War, a study of children in Europe after the Second World War, coverage of the establishment of Israel, and portraits of twentieth-century notables. Opens Sept. 13. . . . ¶ Portraits, views of New York City, and science photographs by Berenice Abbott, all from the center's permanent collection. Opens Sept. 13. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

SEASON OPENERS—**FRÉDÉRIC BRENNER**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **JEFF BURTON**, Kaplan, 48 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **ROBERT CAPA**, Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Through Oct. 18. . . . **PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA** and **HARRY CALLAHAN**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Both open Sept. 12. . . . **MICHAEL EASTMAN**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Opens Sept. 11. . . . **PATRICK FAIGENBAUM**, Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **RALPH GIBSON**, Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; opens Sept. 13. . . . **LYLE ASHTON HARRIS**, Tilton, 49 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **LEWIS HINE**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **RUDOLF KOPPITZ**, Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **ANNIE LEIBOVITZ**, Danziger, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **LOUIS LUSSIER**, Shainman, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 5. . . . **JOSEFA MULAIRE**, Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **JERRY SCHATZBERG**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Opens Sept. 12. . . . **JOHN SCHLESINGER**, Saul, 560 Broadway. Opens Sept. 12. . . . **VALERIE SHAFF**, Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. Opens Sept. 11. . . . **SHELLBURNE THURBER**, Inglett, 100 Wooster St. Opens Sept. 11. . . . **WOLFGANG TILLMANS**, Rosen, 130 Prince St. Opens Sept. 14. . . . **ROMAN VISHNIAC**, Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **FREDERIC WEBER** and **ALVIN BOOTH**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. Both through Oct. 12.

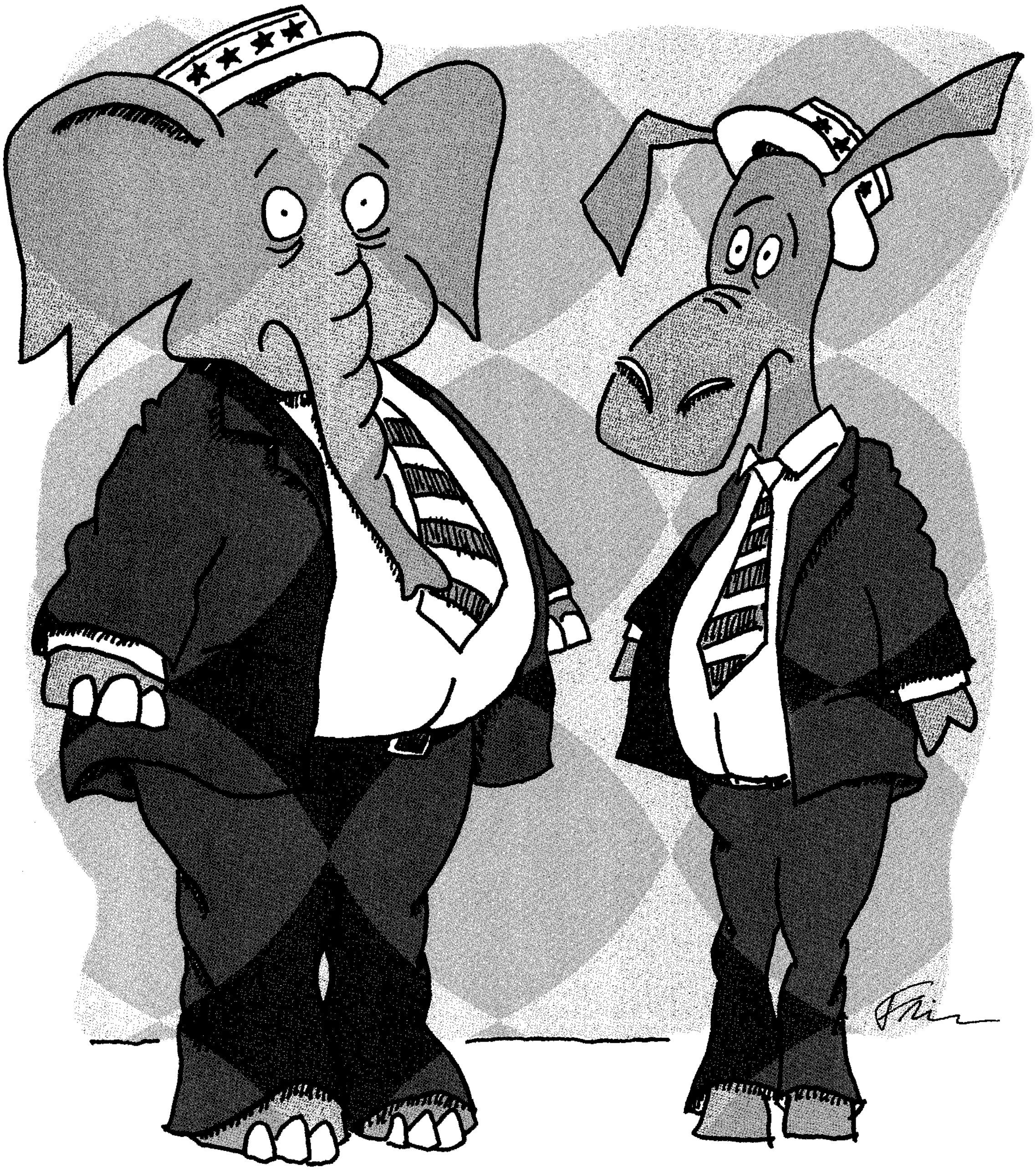
(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Jewish Museum.)

ONLY CONNECT

Web Sightings

GUYANA (http://www.word.com/place/guyana)—Created originally as a feature story for Word, the groundbreaking cultural Webzine, this travelogue pleased the editors so much that they decided to leave it up as its own site. Using the popular Frames technology (which allows you to view several different screens at once, and manipulate them all), Guyana recounts a 1994 expedition to the South American jungle by three New York artists, Bob Braine, Mark Dion, and Alexis Rockman. The front page replicates, dog-ears and all, the sort of sensationalistic paperbacks ("Romance, terror and exotic adventure") that Dell used to put out. For each of the six weeks the men spent in the bush—drawing, writing, getting lost, drunk, depressed—there is a different page, split into four frames: three are given over to the artists' journals, which you can scroll through independently, clicking on hot-linked words for images (generally photos and illustrations of flora and fauna) and text (passages from Conrad, Emerson, and Sontag) that take shape in the fourth. Karthik Krishna Swaminathan has composed a different tune for each week; all of them download quickly and each lasts about five minutes—long enough for you to read several journal entries.

What emerges is a sort of group portrait of the artists. Braine mocks himself as he describes vomiting into the river, inadvertently feeding the piranhas. Dion seems to be the most pragmatic, dutifully writing his three girlfriends each evening, and mindful not to put a letter in the wrong envelope. Rockman is the Alyosha of the trio, kvetching and wondering why they're there. The country itself seems almost incidental in this self-imposed sentence with flashes of history ("We call it a Jim Jones," a guide says of a Kool-Aid drink). "I think experiences like these operate better for me through memory," Rockman writes ruefully after he's hacked his way out of the jungle. You leave Guyana knowing what Kurtz knew: that the heart of darkness lies within.



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York City Opera—Opening performances of the company's fall season, which runs through Nov. 24: FALSTAFF, in a new production that features Sherrill Milnes in the title role. (Sept. 11 and Sept. 14 at 8.) . . . MADAMA BUTTERFLY. (Sept. 12 and Sept. 17 at 8.) . . . LA BOHÈME. (Sept. 14 at 1:30.) . . . DER ROSENKAVALIER, with Elizabeth Holleque as the Marschallin, Gwendolyn Jones as Octavian, and Nancy Allen Lundy as Sophie. (Sept. 15 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "Lucia di Lammermoor." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 14 at 7:30 and Sept. 15 at 2:30. Through Oct. 6.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Chamber Symphony—The orchestra opens its twentieth season with a concert honoring Omus Hirshbein, who helped found it, nurtured it during his long tenure as head of performing arts at its former home, the 92nd Street Y, and now advocates for the larger musical community as Director of Music, Opera/Music Theatre, and Presenting (Education and Access) of the National Endowment for the Arts. The program, under the direction of Gerard Schwarz, includes Beethoven's "Leonore" Overture No. 3, Richard Danielpour's "Canticle of Peace" (featuring baritone William Sharp and the newly established New York Chamber Symphony Chorus), the première of David Diamond's "Night Thoughts" (dedicated to Mr. Hirschbein), Bach's A-Minor Violin Concerto (with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg), Lutoslawski's "Paganini Variations" for piano and orchestra (with André Watts), and vocal works featuring soprano Patricia Schuman, mezzo-soprano Wendy Hoffman, and tenor Paul Charles Clarke. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Sept. 11 at 8.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts Johan Svendsen's "Coronation March," Henri Vieuxtemps's Fourth Violin Concerto (with Arturo Delmoni), Liszt's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (with William Wolfram), and three of Mahler's "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" songs (with baritone John Kramar). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Sept. 16 at 2 and 7 and Sept. 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Music by Richard Robbins—You've surely heard his music: he's the staff composer, more or less, for Merchant Ivory Productions. The Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by Harry Rabinowitz, will play excerpts from his scores for "The Remains of the Day," "Howard's End," "A Room with a View," "Maurice," "Heat and Dust," and the producers' soon-to-be-released "The Proprietor" and "Surviving Picasso," in a benefit evening that also includes readings by well-known actors and solo musical turns by percussionist Zakir Hussain and singers Barbara Hendricks and Nell Carter. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 17 at 7.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Pianist Pedja Muzijevic joins musicians from the New York Philharmonic, including principal flutist Jeanne Baxtresser, in chamber works by Walter Gieseking, Debussy, Philippe Gaubert, Liszt, Otar Taktakishvili, and Fikret Amirov. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Sept. 12 at 7:30 and Sept. 15 at 4.)

A Multiplicity of Flutes—Five flutists take turns playing in sonatas, trios, and quartets by Friedrich Kuhlau, Ilan Rechtman, and others. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Sept. 15 at noon.)

Two for Four—Violinist Anton Miller, violist Rebecca Young, cellist Maria Kitsopoulos, and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform two of Brahms's piano quartets. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Sept. 15 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Friends and Enemies of New Music—The contemporary-music society presents new and recent works for violin by eleven composers. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Sept. 16 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Adi Mencel and Pamela Goldberg—The flutist and the pianist offer Bach's G-Minor Sonata, as well as music by Mozart and Poulenc. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. Sept. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

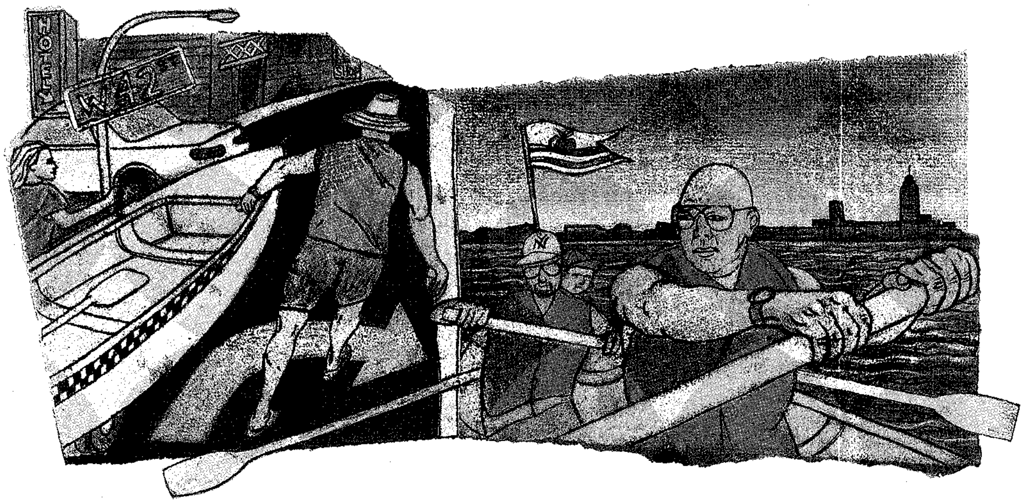
Where To, Mac?—Taxis have been racing around Manhattan longer than you thought. In the last century, they raced out from a cove at the bottom of Whitehall Street into Upper New York Bay, to meet merchant ships and passenger liners. These "Whitehall gigs" ferried journalists and ship chandlers out, and passengers (mostly first-class) in, but the business dried up around the time of the Wilson Administration. Nevertheless, a few water taxis have been spotted recently, dodging traffic on 42nd Street. Floating the Apple, a group of maritime historians and boatbuilders (and actors, engineers, surveyors, etc.), maintains a fleet of the rowboats in the McGraw-Hill Building, and each week they dolly a few of them down to Pier 84 (at the end of 44th St.) for a row on the Hudson. The group welcomes first-timers on the twenty-five-foot boats, and, though the rowing can be strenuous, a lot of people do join in and pull their weight. For more information on the boatbuilding atelier at the McGraw-Hill Building and on the water tours, call 564-5412. For those interested in a less taxing way to enjoy the enterprise, there will be a racing exhibition at noon on Sept. 15, as part of the Hudson River Maritime Heritage Festival, at Liberty State Park in Jersey City. For a schedule of festival events, call 1-888 925-5929.

Super Tuesday—On Sept. 17, pundits and politicos burn the candle at both ends. At 8:30 A.M.: Publisher Harold Evans hosts a breakfast skull session on the literature of political campaigns, with James Carville, Richard Ben Cramer, Eleanor Clift, and Sally Quinn. (mad.61, 10 E. 61st St. For reservations, call 940-7480.) . . . ¶ At 8 P.M.: Former Governor Mario Cuomo talks politics. When contacted at press time, he had not yet decided on a topic. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. For more information, call 996-1100.)

Readings—Sept. 12 at 6:30: Frank McCourt reads from "Angela's Ashes," his memoir of his boyhood in Brooklyn and Limerick. (Rizzoli, 454 West Broadway. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 12 at 7:30: The Amazing Kreskin locates hidden objects and inflicts imaginary pain, in a reading and demonstration from his latest book, "How to Be (a Fake) Kreskin." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway and 66th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 7:30: Rust Belt polemicist Michael Moore reads from his book "Downsize This!" (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

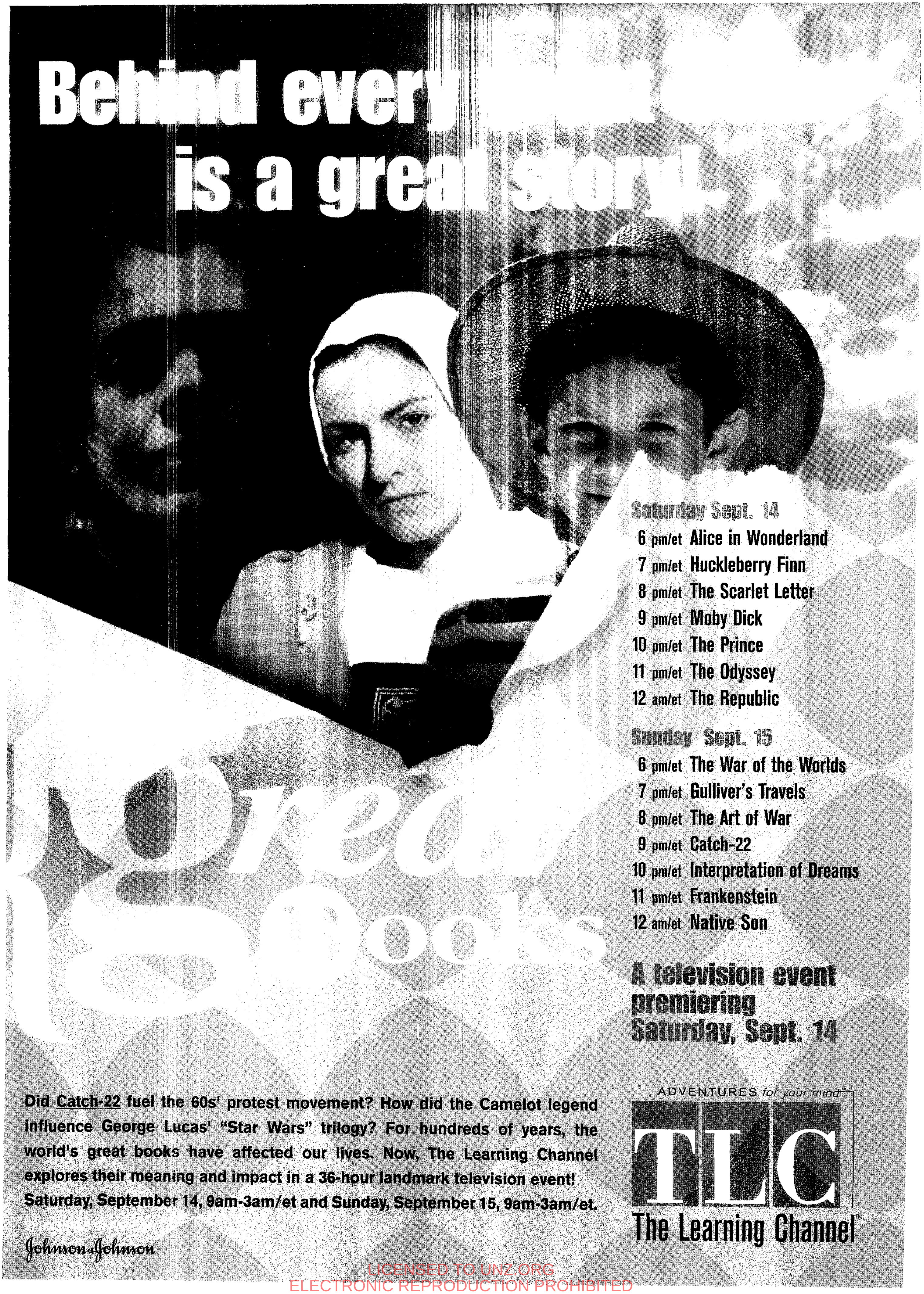
Talks—Sept. 12 at 5: In a discussion of their book "The Other Islands of New York City," Sharon Seitz and Stuart Miller explore less frequented shores of the metropolitan archipelago. (South Street Seaport Museum Bookstore, 12 Fulton St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 12 at 7: Paleontologist Michael Novacek, of the Museum of Natural History, recounts the fossil finds (nesting oviraptors, a dinosaur embryo, early mammals, etc.) unearthed in the museum's ongoing dig at Ukhaa Tolgod (or "Brown Hills") in the southern reaches of the Gobi Desert. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 6:30: Culinary historian Karen Hess and *Times* food columnist Molly O'Neill, among others, savor the life and work of Amelia Simmons, the author of America's first cookbook, which was published in 1796. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park West. 873-3400.) . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 6: Essayist Vivian Gornick examines writers (Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens, Alfred Kazin, Charles Reznikoff) who have looked to the streets of the great cities for their inspiration. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 930-0571.) . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 6:30: Architect Fred W. Clarke, a partner at Cesar Pelli & Associates, shows slides of the firm's projects in Asia, including the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, currently the world's tallest, with spires that rise thirty-three feet higher than Chicago's Sears Tower. (Asia Society, Park Avenue at 70th St. 517-2742.)

Walks—Sept. 11 at 12:30: Architectural historian Matt Postal scans the high culture and theme kitsch along 57th Street. For more information, call the Municipal Art Society at 935-3960. . . . ¶ Sept. 15 at 1:45: Howard Goldberg of Adventure on a Shoestring wades into Turtle Bay, the midtown residential area named, some say, for its original testudinal occupants. For more information, call 265-2663.



Rowboat excursions on the Hudson with Floating the Apple.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ



Behind every [illegible] is a great story.

Great Books

Saturday Sept. 14

6 pm/et	Alice in Wonderland
7 pm/et	Huckleberry Finn
8 pm/et	The Scarlet Letter
9 pm/et	Moby Dick
10 pm/et	The Prince
11 pm/et	The Odyssey
12 am/et	The Republic

Sunday Sept. 15

6 pm/et	The War of the Worlds
7 pm/et	Gulliver's Travels
8 pm/et	The Art of War
9 pm/et	Catch-22
10 pm/et	Interpretation of Dreams
11 pm/et	Frankenstein
12 am/et	Native Son

A television event premiering Saturday, Sept. 14

Did Catch-22 fuel the 60s' protest movement? How did the Camelot legend influence George Lucas' "Star Wars" trilogy? For hundreds of years, the world's great books have affected our lives. Now, The Learning Channel explores their meaning and impact in a 36-hour landmark television event! Saturday, September 14, 9am-3am/et and Sunday, September 15, 9am-3am/et.

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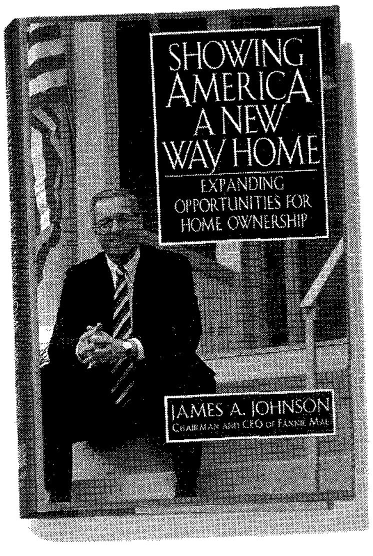
—*Thomas P. Gerrity, dean, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania*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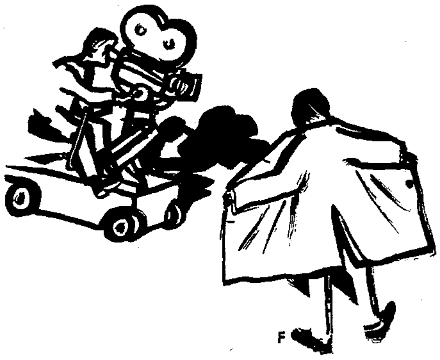

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

American Buffalo—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening September 13. (Cinema II, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

American Strays—Three vignettes written and directed by Michael Covert, about violence in the American West. With John Savage, Luke Perry, and James Russo. Opening September 13. (Village East Cinemas.)

Brother of Sleep—André Eisermann plays a nineteenth-century Austrian composer, Dana Vávrová the woman he loves, and Ben Becker her brother and his best friend, in a film adapted by Robert Schneider from his 1992 novel and directed by Joseph Vilsmaier. In German. Opening September 13. (Quad Cinema.)

Feeling Minnesota—Keanu Reeves and Vincent D'Onofrio star as estranged brothers at odds over a tough young woman (Cameron Diaz), in a black comedy written and directed by Steven Baigelman. Opening September 13. (Cinema I, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Fly Away Home—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening September 13. (Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Grace of My Heart—A drama about a singer-songwriter (Illeana Douglas) in New York and California in the nineteen-sixties. Written and directed by Allison Anders. With John Turturro, Matt Dillon, and Eric Stoltz. Opening September 13. (Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII.)

Maximum Risk—Jean-Claude Van Damme battles Russian mobsters in New York City, in an action picture directed by Ringo Lam. Opening September 13. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Orpheum VII.)

A Modern Affair—A single New Yorker (Lisa Eichhorn) becomes pregnant with the aid of a sperm bank, then tracks down her child's father (Stanley Tucci), in a romantic comedy directed by Vern Oakley. Opening September 13. (Village East Cinemas.)

The Rich Man's Wife—A thriller written and directed by Amy Holden Jones, starring Halle Berry as a widow whom the police suspect of having murdered her husband (Christopher McDonald). Opening September 13. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

Synthetic Pleasures—Iara Lee's documentary about better living through technology. Opening September 13. (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Cinema Village.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 30.)

Basquiat—Making his début as a movie director, the painter Julian Schnabel offers a fond portrait of his fellow-artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (Jeffrey Wright), who died in 1988 from a heroin overdose. It isn't hard to read his career as a cautionary New York tale; the movie, however, is helplessly in love with him, and Schnabel never dreams of questioning his art. The film is best viewed as a freakish social comedy, its levity assured by a fine cast: the sweet-natured Wright, Benicio del Toro (forever strange) as Basquiat's best friend, and a suitably zonked David Bowie as Andy Warhol.—A.L. (8/19/96) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

The Big Squeeze—Peter Dobson, Danny Nucci, and Luca Bercovici compete for Lara Flynn Boyle and a large sum of money, in a film written and directed by Marcus De Leon. (First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Regency, and Village East Cinemas.)

Bogus—A foster mother (Whoopi Goldberg) finds that she must deal with her seven-year-old charge's imaginary friend (Gérard Depardieu). Directed by Norman Jewison. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Gemini, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Bulletproof—Former best friends—one (Adam Sandler) a crook, one (Damon Wayans) a cop—join forces to thwart both the mob and the police. Directed by Ernest Dickerson. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Showplace.)

Courage Under Fire—The issue in Edward Zwick's very sober and correct military drama is whether the medevac pilot Karen Walden (Meg Ryan), killed in action in the Gulf War, should be awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor; Denzel Washington, as the officer in charge of the investigation, has to sort out wildly divergent accounts of her behavior. Washington's thoughtful, delicately shaded performance holds the viewer's interest for a while, until the material's relentless lack of consequence finally overpowers him. The movie isn't a disgrace, but it doesn't deserve any medals.—T.R. (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and 23rd St. West Triplex.)

Emma—Douglas McGrath wrote and directed this charming, wrongheaded version of Jane Austen's great comedy of manipulation. Gwyneth Paltrow plays the heroine, and Jeremy Northam makes an absurdly young Mr. Knightley. He and Paltrow are a lovely couple, but McGrath replaces Austen's notion that love takes them by surprise—evolving, as it were, out of intellectual sparring—with easy romance. Ideal viewing for those who like to believe that Jane Austen was, above all, nice.—A.L. (8/5/96) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

Ernesto Che Guevara: The Bolivian Diary—A Swiss documentary, drawn from the revolutionary's diary, covering the last eleven months of his life. Directed by Richard Dindo. In English and Spanish. (Film Forum; through Sept. 17.)

First Kid—A comedy starring Sinbad as a Secret Service agent assigned to protect the President's teen-age son (Brock Pierce). Directed by David Mickey Evans. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Cinemas, Guild, 23rd St. Triplex, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue; through Sept. 12.)

Girls Town—Lili Taylor is an underachieving unwed mother, Bruklin Harris a poet stuck in a strict home, and Anna Grace a bright teen-ager toying with delinquency, in Jim McKay's low-budget but ambitious look at the coming-of-age of adolescent girls. The three women worked together for months to create a casual documentary naturalness; unfortunately, the script they came up with (in collaboration with McKay and Denise Casano) is awfully literal in its take on the brutalization of young women in this country.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center.)

Independence Day—The big summer alien-invasion movie, in which the German director Roland Emmerich delivers the populist message that the land of the free is still a scrappy, defiant, can-do country. Bill Pullman plays the Clintonesque President; Jeff Goldblum has the geek-elegant role of a cable-television technician turned scientific savior; Will Smith is a

Marine fighter pilot who captures the first alien with a punch to the head. At the end, millions are dead and the battered survivors stand around grinning as if they've just won a volleyball game. This shallowness is scarier than anything in the movie. The film gives the audience what it craves: spectacular nothing.—J.W. (7/15/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Sutton, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Jack—Francis Ford Coppola's cloying, vapid family film has Robin Williams playing a ten-year-old in a forty-year-old's body—he suffers from a mysterious malady that makes him age four times faster than other people. As if Williams's mugging and crying his way through two hours of a "Big" rip-off weren't enough, Coppola directs in a style so flat and unfocussed it's as though he had never left his trailer. This is hackwork—the dullest movie he's ever made.—B.D. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; through Sept. 12.)

Kansas City—Robert Altman's movie is set in the nineteen-thirties, in the jazz clubs of the town where the director grew up. An angry-looking broad named Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh) discovers that her husband, a petty crook, is being held by Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), a club proprietor and gangland chief. In retaliation, she kidnaps a politician's wife (Miranda Richardson) and drags her around the city, trailed by a small crowd of subplots. Unfortunately, the movie is killed by its two female leads, who seem to be involved in some twitch-and-frown competition of their own. It's a relief when they take a break and allow Altman to concentrate on the jazz.—A.L. (8/19/96) (Baronet and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Lone Star—The setting is Frontera, a small Texas town on the Mexican border, once policed by Sheriff Buddy Deeds (Matthew McConaughey) and now overseen by his son Sam (Chris Cooper). The writer-director, John Sayles, shifts between the two eras with gracious ease, linking them with an old crime—the unsolved and unmourned killing of Buddy's predecessor, Charley Wade (Kris Kristofferson), who held sway through bigotry and corruption. Thanks to Kristofferson's scary and unyielding performance, the murder mystery becomes the core of the film. Elsewhere you can sense the strain as Sayles works away at the generation gaps, but by the end you're grateful for the movie's weight and substance—rare virtues in a flimsy summer.—A.L. (7/8/96) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Maborosi—A young widow (Makiko Esumi) tries to come to terms with her husband's suicide, in a film adapted from a 1979 short story by Teru Miyamoto. Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda. In Japanese. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Madagascar Skin—A love story about a shy young gay man (John Hannah) and a straight older thief (Bernard Hill), written and directed by Chris Newby. (Quad Cinema.)

Rendezvous in Paris—Eric Rohmer's new film is a characteristically elegant diversion, consisting of three short stories about young lovers in Paris. The seventy-six-year-old filmmaker has made it his peculiar business, over the years, to dramatize the pleasures of unconsummated love, and this picture demonstrates—in triplicate—that no one makes nothing happen more seductively. In French.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

She's the One—The second movie by the twenty-eight-year-old writer and director Edward Burns is almost indistinguishable from his puzzlingly successful low-budget début feature, "The Brothers McMullen" (1995). Once again, he has made a romantic comedy on the theme that young Irish-American guys are utterly confounded by the opposite sex—a notion barely robust enough for a single movie. The addition of established actors (Jennifer Aniston, Cameron Diaz, and John Mahoney) to alumni of the "McMullen" cast (Maxine Bahns, Mike McGlone, and Burns himself) raises the overall skill level a notch; and the filmmaker gamely tries to adopt a brighter, more explicitly farcical tone. But it's no use: Burns has no talent for breeziness. And now that he's making major-studio pictures he no longer has any excuse for the stubborn ordinariness of his sensibility; it would take an awfully pliable imagination to romanticize this glossy, mildly amusing sitcom as the work of a vigorous and distinctive new comic artist.—T.R. (9/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, 34th St. East, and Village East Cinemas.)

Small Faces—This vibrant film by the Scottish brothers Billy and Gillies MacKinnon (they collaborated on the screenplay, with Gillies directing) concerns the coming-of-age of three adolescent brothers (Iain Robertson, Joseph McFadden, and J. S. Duffy) involved with Glaswegian gangs in 1968. The camera work is grippingly intense, and the little-known actors give nuanced, startling performances. Despite a contrived happy ending, it's a wonder of a film.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

The Spitfire Grill—Lee David Zlotoff's first film, a little-people fable set in a picturesque village in Maine, is chock full of uplift: it features redemption, martyrdom, reverent mountain vistas, and cross-generational female bonding. The mountains (which are really in Vermont) perform reliably, but everything else about the picture is solemnly berserk. Zlotoff—who also wrote the screenplay—somehow combines the sentimentality of a low-budget rural-virtue drama with the sleek calculation of a Lifetime cable movie, and several of the actors appear to be engaged in a competition for the most annoying Down East accent. Although a staggering amount of human potential gets realized here, the viewer remains unawed: this

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PORTUGAL IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 1995 ASTA/SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD.

spiritual landscape looks phony and remote, like retouched mountains on a picture postcard. With Alison Elliott, Ellen Burstyn, Marcia Gay Harden, and Will Patton. The score is by James Horner, and for once his swollen, bathetic music feels not only appropriate but richly deserved.—T.R. (9/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Sweet Nothing—Michael Imperioli plays a young Bronx office worker who starts selling crack in order to help support the wife and kids, only to wind up a lowdown, lying user. This intelligent study is based on a real addict's diary; it's tightly, lovingly done, and Imperioli and Mira Sorvino (as his wife) strike just the right balance of fragility and obliviousness. Directed by Gary Winick, from a script by Lee Drysdale.—S.K. (Lincoln Square.)

A Time to Kill—Joel Schumacher's Deep South courtroom thriller has the solemn tone of a Stanley Kramer social-problem drama. The script—by Akiva Goldsman, from a John Grisham novel—follows a young white lawyer (Matthew McConaughey) as he defends a black man (Samuel L. Jackson) accused of murdering a couple of rednecks. The movie inflates Grisham's modest, perceptive portrait of a Mississippi town into a smug lecture on race relations; what the hero and all the other sweat-soaked characters really need is central air-conditioning, but what they get is an overpowering blast of homiletic hot air. Also with Sandra Bullock and Kevin Spacey.—T.R. (7/29/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Tin Cup—In Ron Shelton's romantic comedy, Kevin Costner plays a once promising golfer who now runs a seedy West Texas driving range. The appearance at the lesson tee of a witty, leggy psychotherapist (Rene Russo) rouses him from his cozy stupor of underachievement: the way to impress her, he decides, is to qualify for the U.S. Open, and win it. Costner gives a terrific comic performance, and Russo makes a wonderful sparring partner. The movie is relaxed, funny, unpredictable, and very sexy. The sensational supporting cast includes Cheech Marin, Don Johnson, and Linda Hart.—T.R. (8/12/96) (Coronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Trainspotting—Why should people looking for a good time see a film about skinny, cynical heroin addicts in Edinburgh? Because the junkies themselves are having such a good time that what sounds grungy and depressing turns out to be weirdly uplifting. The performances feel driven and unashamed, and, though the film sells you short on plot, it makes you ravenous for the next visual fix. But in the end this approach becomes exhausting: you may yield to the film's verve while still praying that it will all be over soon. Directed by Danny Boyle; screenplay by John Hodge, from Irvine Welsh's novel.—A.L. (7/22/96) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through Sept. 12.)

The Trigger Effect—A thriller written and directed by David Koepp, about a suburban couple (Kyle MacLachlan and Elisabeth Shue) caught in the middle of a blackout. With Dermot Mulroney. (Art Greenwich Twin, East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and State.)

A Very Brady Sequel—Tim Matheson plays a thief who impersonates the dead first husband of Carol Brady (Shelley Long) in this second satire of the ludicrous TV series; it loosely re-creates such famous episodes as the family trip to Hawaii and the time Greg and Marcia set up their own far-out pad in the attic. As in the first movie, the cleverest jokes present the innocent Bradys as a strange tribe with exotic rituals, like back-yard potato-sack racing and bizarrely choreographed dancing; this time they are mistaken for everything from Jehovah's Witnesses to performance artists. There are, again, a few uncannily accurate moments—Gary Cole's imitation of Robert Reed's original Mike Brady, delivered in chipper, clipped inflections that suggest some sort of brain trauma, stands out—but the humor is less affectionate and a good deal more coarse. Mike and Carol spend a lot of time poking each other with carrots. Directed by Arlene Sanford.—S.K. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; starting Sept. 13.)

Opening Sept. 13, Illeana Douglas in "Grace of My Heart."

N. ASCENCIOS

Walking and Talking—In Nicole Holofcener's fresh and accomplished début comedy, Catherine Keener plays Amelia, a thirtyish New Yorker; Anne Heche is her best friend, Laura, whose announcement that she's about to marry sends Amelia into a panic. Cinematically speaking, the movie is somewhat tame, but Holofcener's writing is trenchant and often hilarious, the actors are fine, and it's nice to see a movie about female friendship that doesn't stoop: at no point do the two women catfight over fame, money, or a man.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Wife—Repulsive. Tom Noonan, the writer and director, and Julie Hagerty team as Jack and Rita, pretentious New Age therapists. Wallace Shawn and Karen Young play Cosmo, a client of theirs, and Arlie, his sociopathic wife. Jack takes joy in ignoring and degrading Rita; Arlie humiliates Cosmo. It's all supposed to be a sendup of New Age practices, but it's really no more than a portrait of two somewhat decent people married to reptiles.—S.K. (The Screening Room.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **AVENTURERA:** Film Forum. . . . **CHAIN REACTION:** Criterion Center. . . . **COLD COMFORT FARM** (reviewed in our issue of 5/13/96): Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **ERASER** (7/8/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE FAN:** Criterion Center, Gemini, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **FLIRT:** Film Forum. . . . **THE FRIGHTENERS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE GREEN HOUSE:** Angelika 57 and Quad Cinema. . . . **HEAVY** (6/17/96): The Screening Room. . . . **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (7/8/96): Embassy 4 and Sutton. . . . **THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU:** 84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **JOHN CARPENTER'S ESCAPE FROM L.A.:** Waverly. . . . **KINGPIN** (8/5/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MANNY & LO:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Waverly. . . . **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE** (6/3/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE NUTTY PROFESSOR** (7/8/96): National Twin. . . . **PURPLE NOON:** Paris. . . . **THE ROCK** (6/17/96): Embassy 4. . . . **SOLO:** Criterion Center. . . . **STEALING BEAUTY** (6/10/96): First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **STONEWALL:** 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **STRIPTEASE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE STUPIDS:** Criterion Center, Sutton, and Waverly. . . . **SUPERCOP:** Embassy 2. . . . **TWISTER** (5/20/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE** (5/27/96): Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Black Sunday (1960)—A rich draught of vampire's blood. With its crypts and cobwebs and eerie old castles set in batty, steamy forests, it's sumptuous enough to have acquired a considerable reputation. The resurrected two-hundred-year-old witch Princess Asa and the beautiful Princess Katia are both played by the English actress Barbara Steele in a deadpan manner that makes evil and good all but indistinguishable; in both roles, she looks like Jacqueline Kennedy in a trance. But you wouldn't want her to be any different in this studio-made Moldavia of 1830. The cinematographer-director, Mario Bava, who specialized in occult horror, and most of the actors are Italian; the story is derived from Gogol. Dubbed into English.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 15.)

Death Race 2000 (1975)—Low-budget sci-fi, from an often amusing suspense script by Robert Thom and Charles B. Griffith, directed by Paul Bartel in his ingratiatingly tacky, sophomoric manner. Bartel seems to have an instinctive kinky comic-book style; the picture zips along, and there's a flip craziness about it—it's an ideal drive-in movie. In the role of a legendary driver in a killer race—points are scored for every pedestrian run down—David Carradine has star presence, and his easy, confident manner gives the film some class; he's very elegant in his black leather clothes and black leather cape. Sylvester Stallone is rather funny as the slobbish, stupid villain, who's always expostulating in anger or disgust. With Louisa Moritz as the crude dumb blonde, and Simone Griffith.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 14.)

Fires on the Plain (1959)—Based on the book by Shohei Ooka, which is said to be the greatest Japanese novel to have come out of the Second World War, this is an appalling picture; it's also a work of epic poetry. The subject is modern man as a cannibal, and after a few minutes this subject doesn't seem at all strange or bizarre: it seems, rather, to be basic. Tamura, the hero, is one of the stragglers of the disintegrating retreating Japanese army—terrified of the Americans, the Filipinos, and of each other. Tamura walks across the plain unharmed because he is already a dead man: he is tubercular—no one wants his flesh. The film is very simple: there is nothing banal, nothing extraneous to the single-minded view of man in extremis. Directed by Kon Ichikawa; the script is by his wife, Natto Wada. It's a masterpiece. In Japanese.—P.K. (Symphony Space; Sept. 17.)

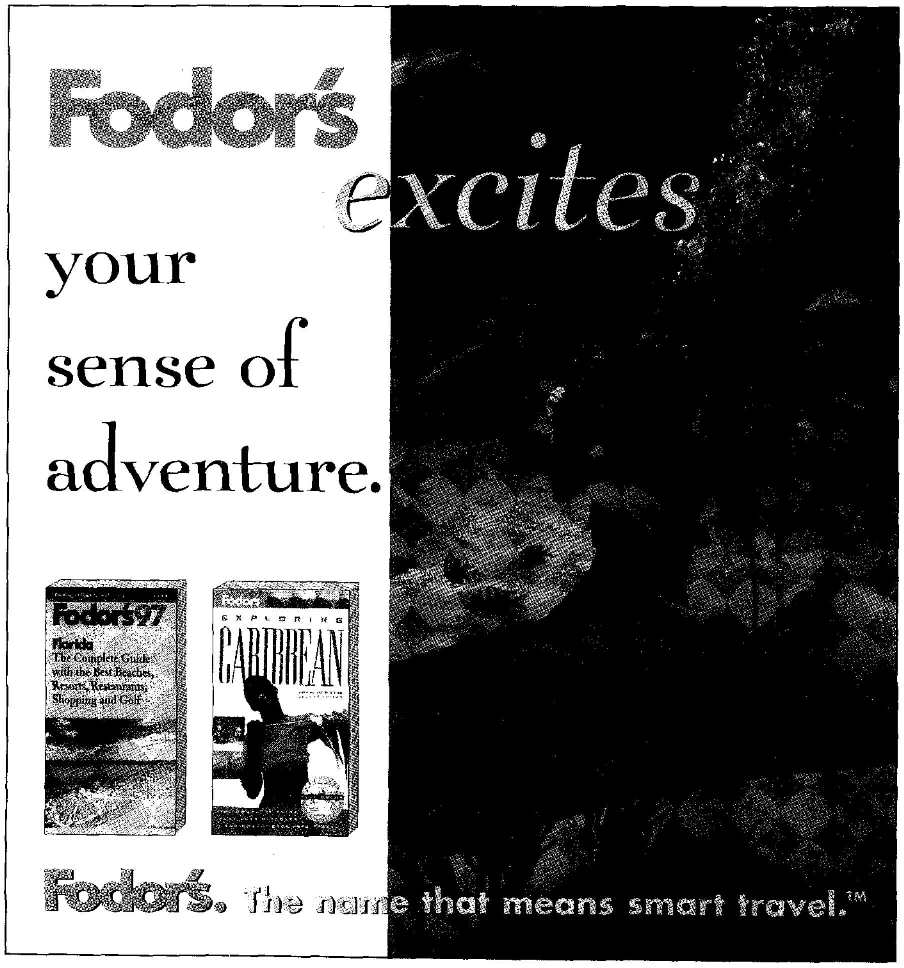
Metropolis (1926)—H. G. Wells called this German silent "quite the silliest film"; Hitler was so impressed by the conception that many years later he tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade its director, Fritz Lang, to make Nazi movies. Lang's prophetic city of the twenty-first century (suggested by his first view of New York) has two levels: one for the rich and pleasure-loving, another—labyrinthine, underground—for the slave-workers who tend the machines. The industrialist-tyrant who runs Metropolis plots to incite riots so that he can crush the workers' rebelliousness. His son has gone down to the workers and fallen in love with the saintly firebrand Maria (Brigitte Helm). The tyrant plots with an inventor, Rotwang (a mad, medieval type like Dr. Caligari and, with his mechanical arm, father to Dr. Strangelove), who, in a phenomenal science-fiction laboratory sequence, creates a steel double for Maria—the false Maria, who leads the masses to revolt. But the destruction gets out of hand, the children of the workers are about to be caught in a flood, and all of Metropolis would be destroyed were it not for the final alliance of the industrialist, his son, the true Maria, and the workers. One of the last examples of the imaginative—but often monstrous—grandeur of the Golden Period of the German film, "Metropolis" is a spectacular example of Expressionist design (grouped human beings are used architecturally), with moments of almost incredible beauty and power (the visionary sequences about the Tower of Babel), absurd ineptitudes (the lovesick hero in his preposterous knickerbockers), and oddities that defy analysis (the robot vamp's bizarre, lewd wink). It's a wonderful, stupefying folly. With Alfred Abel as the industrialist, Gustav Fröhlich as his son, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Fritz Rasp, and Heinrich George. Script by Thea von Harbou (who did go to work for the Nazis); cinematography by Karl Freund and Gunther Rittau, with Eugen Schüfftan shooting the special effects.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 16.)

Peeping Tom (1960)—For connoisseurs of repellent cinema. There's never been a psycho thriller as insidiously skin-crawling as Michael Powell's portrait of a would-be director as a serial killer. Carl Boehm is the title creep, a focus-puller at a London movie studio who moonlights as a pornographic still-photographer and spends his spare time shooting a documentary about murder, starring his victims. Boehm's father, played by Powell, was a celebrated biologist who wanted to chart every stage of human development and specialized in "fear and the nervous system." While using a 16-mm. camera to document his son's growth, he went to fantastic extremes, even scaring him awake with a lizard so he could study the boy's hysterical reaction. Boehm extends this line of research: he turns the third leg of his tripod into a bayonet, and films his female targets as they die in a state of excruciating fright. The movie has its witty moments—a shrink notes that Boehm "has his father's eyes." But "Peeping Tom" isn't a black comedy. It's an obsessive-compulsive nightmare. (Brian De Palma borrowed the back story when he cooked up "Raising Cain.")—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 13 and Sept. 16.)

Point Blank (1967)—Showoffy, brutal, somewhat inexplicable account of a crook (Lee Marvin) who seeks justice on his own murderous terms. But it's director John Boorman's virtuosity that is the star. Intermittently dazzling, the film has more energy and invention than Boorman seems to know what to do with. He appears to take the title literally; one comes out exhilarated but bewildered. With Angie Dickinson (she has her best scene slapping Marvin repeatedly—to no effect), Carroll O'Connor, Keenan Wynn, Michael Strong, and John Vernon. The West Coast settings include the actual (though no longer in use) prison on Alcatraz. Cinematography by Philip Lathrop—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 14 and Sept. 17.)

Psycho (1960)—When he directed this amazingly effective low-budget thriller in black-and-white with a TV-tested crew, Alfred Hitchcock went after the youthful horror-film audience with a vengeance. Everything from the titillating opening of Janet Leigh and John Gavin getting dressed after making love during her lunch hour to the notorious slashing shocks and reversals made the film a rite-of-passage smash. Written by Joseph Stefano from a novel by Robert Bloch, it's a traumatic crystallization of the petit-bourgeois side of Hitchcock's sensibility. No improper thought goes unpunished. All the characters are trapped in stifling circumstances—especially poor Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), the manager of a motel stranded beside a no-longer-travelled road. With Vera Miles, Martin Balsam, and Simon Oakland as the psychiatrist who unloads the explanations.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 13 and Sept. 17.)

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954)—Stanley Donen directed this big, highly praised musical, set in Oregon in 1850, and adapted from Stephen Vincent Benét's story "The Sobbin' Women" (based on Plutarch's "The Rape of the Sabine Women"). It's marred by a holiday family-picture heartiness—the M-G-M back-lot Americana gets rather thick. Howard Keel is the lead, with Jane Powell opposite him. The picture is ambitious in its use of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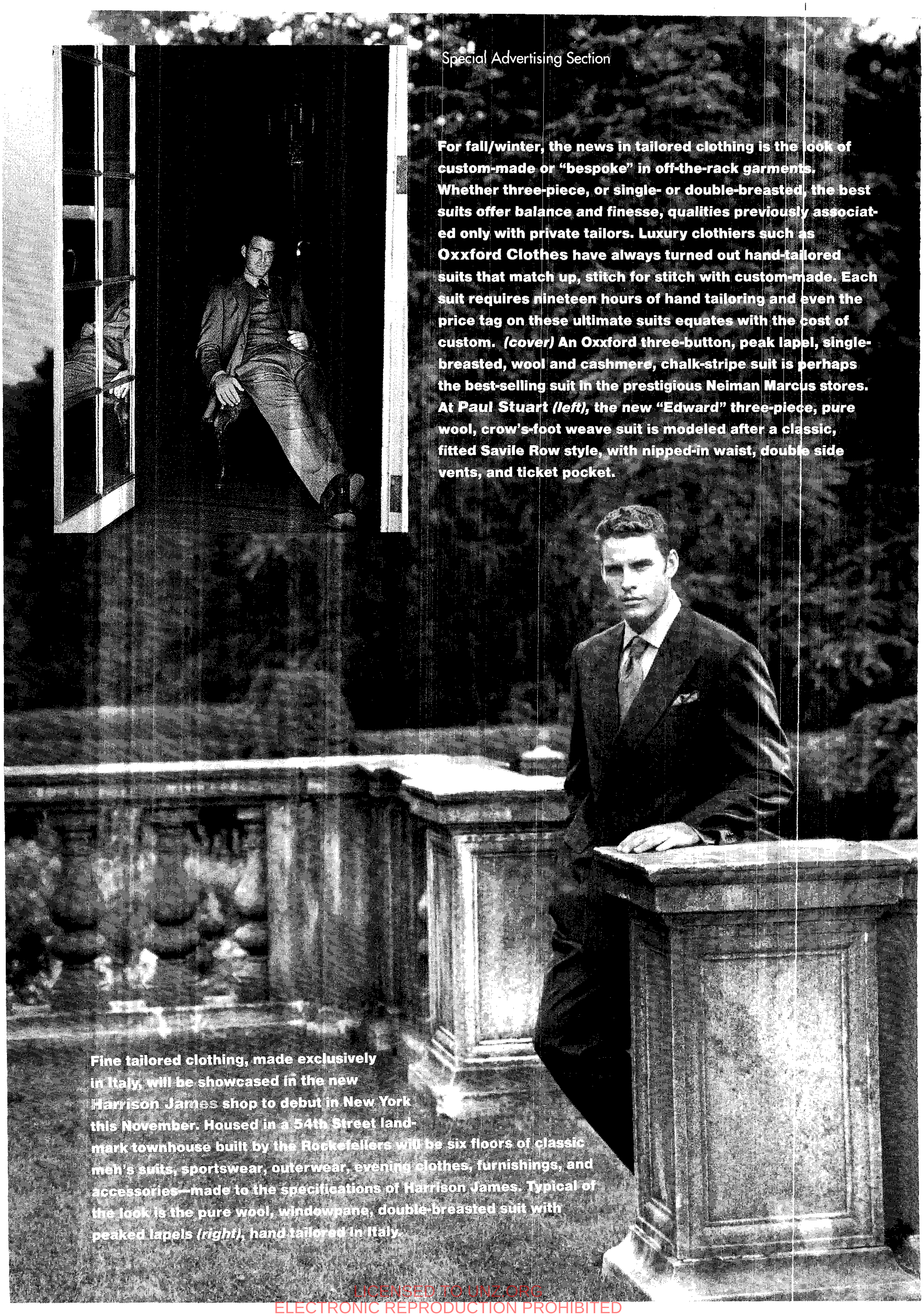
IN PRAISE OF...THE SUIT

It is altogether fitting, here in the last decade of the century, that fine tailoring is, once again, front and center in the world arena of men's fashion. Ultimately, if a man is to achieve true elegance in his personal style, owning a properly tailored suit is imperative. The thirties taught us that, although more recently it had fallen out of favor. Until the last year or two, sportswear has dominated the fashion spotlight, with the suit under attack by those who would blur the distinction between dressed up and dressed down. Indeed, "suits" took on a pejorative connotation somewhere along the line, particularly when leveled at those in the corporate sector.

Today, designers and, perhaps more importantly, men in general, have rethought their attitudes about tailored clothing. But what is particularly interesting about this latest swing of the men's fashion pendulum is the obsession with regard to the fit, quality, and style of tailored clothing. So hugely popular are suits once again, that style-conscious men everywhere are shopping with sartorial zeal bordering on the fanatical. And price, it would seem, is no object. In short, the suit is chic once more.

by Ralph DiGennaro
Photography by Gentl & Hyers



For fall/winter, the news in tailored clothing is the look of custom-made or "bespoke" in off-the-rack garments. Whether three-piece, or single- or double-breasted, the best suits offer balance and finesse, qualities previously associated only with private tailors. Luxury clothiers such as Oxxford Clothes have always turned out hand-tailored suits that match up, stitch for stitch with custom-made. Each suit requires nineteen hours of hand tailoring and even the price tag on these ultimate suits equates with the cost of custom. *(cover)* An Oxxford three-button, peak lapel, single-breasted, wool and cashmere, chalk-stripe suit is perhaps the best-selling suit in the prestigious Neiman Marcus stores. At Paul Stuart *(left)*, the new "Edward" three-piece, pure wool, crow's-foot weave suit is modeled after a classic, fitted Savile Row style, with nipped-in waist, double side vents, and ticket pocket.

Fine tailored clothing, made exclusively in Italy, will be showcased in the new Harrison James shop to debut in New York this November. Housed in a 54th Street landmark townhouse built by the Rockefellers will be six floors of classic men's suits, sportswear, outerwear, evening clothes, furnishings, and accessories—made to the specifications of Harrison James. Typical of the look is the pure wool, windowpane, double-breasted suit with peaked lapels *(right)*, hand tailored in Italy.

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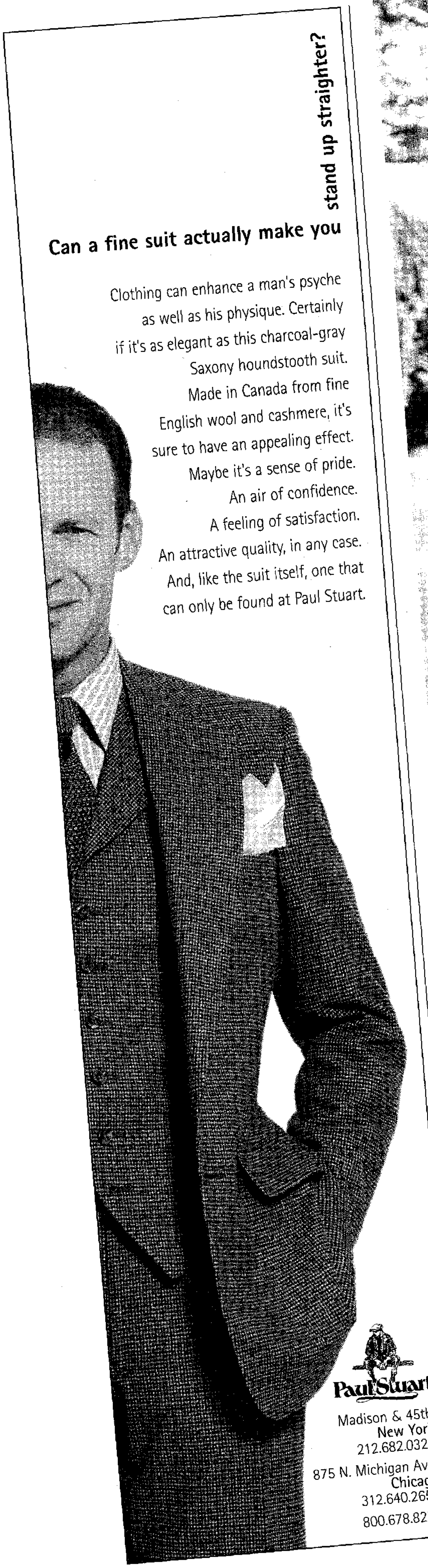

Can a fine suit actually make you stand up straighter?

Clothing can enhance a man's psyche as well as his physique. Certainly if it's as elegant as this charcoal-gray Saxony houndstooth suit. Made in Canada from fine English wool and cashmere, it's sure to have an appealing effect. Maybe it's a sense of pride. An air of confidence. A feeling of satisfaction. An attractive quality, in any case. And, like the suit itself, one that can only be found at Paul Stuart.

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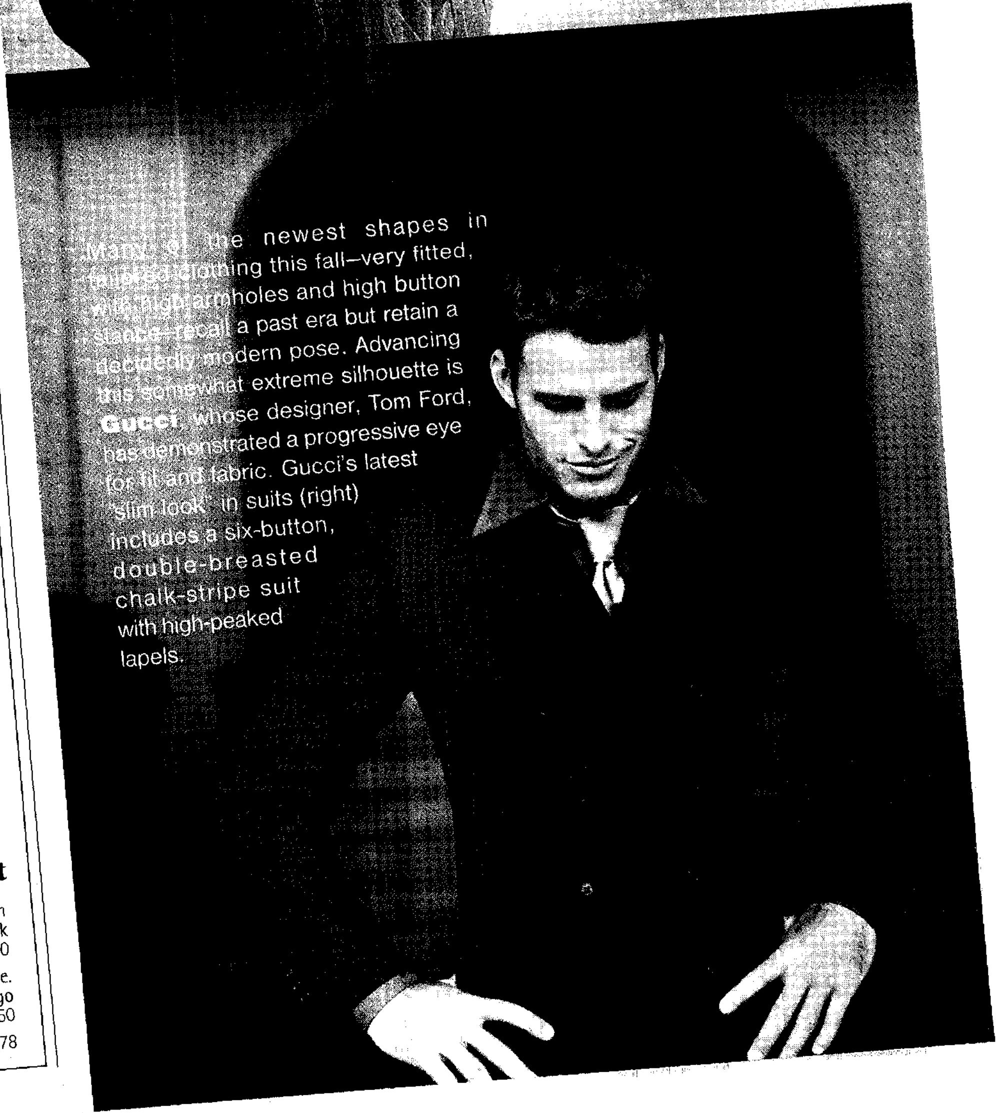
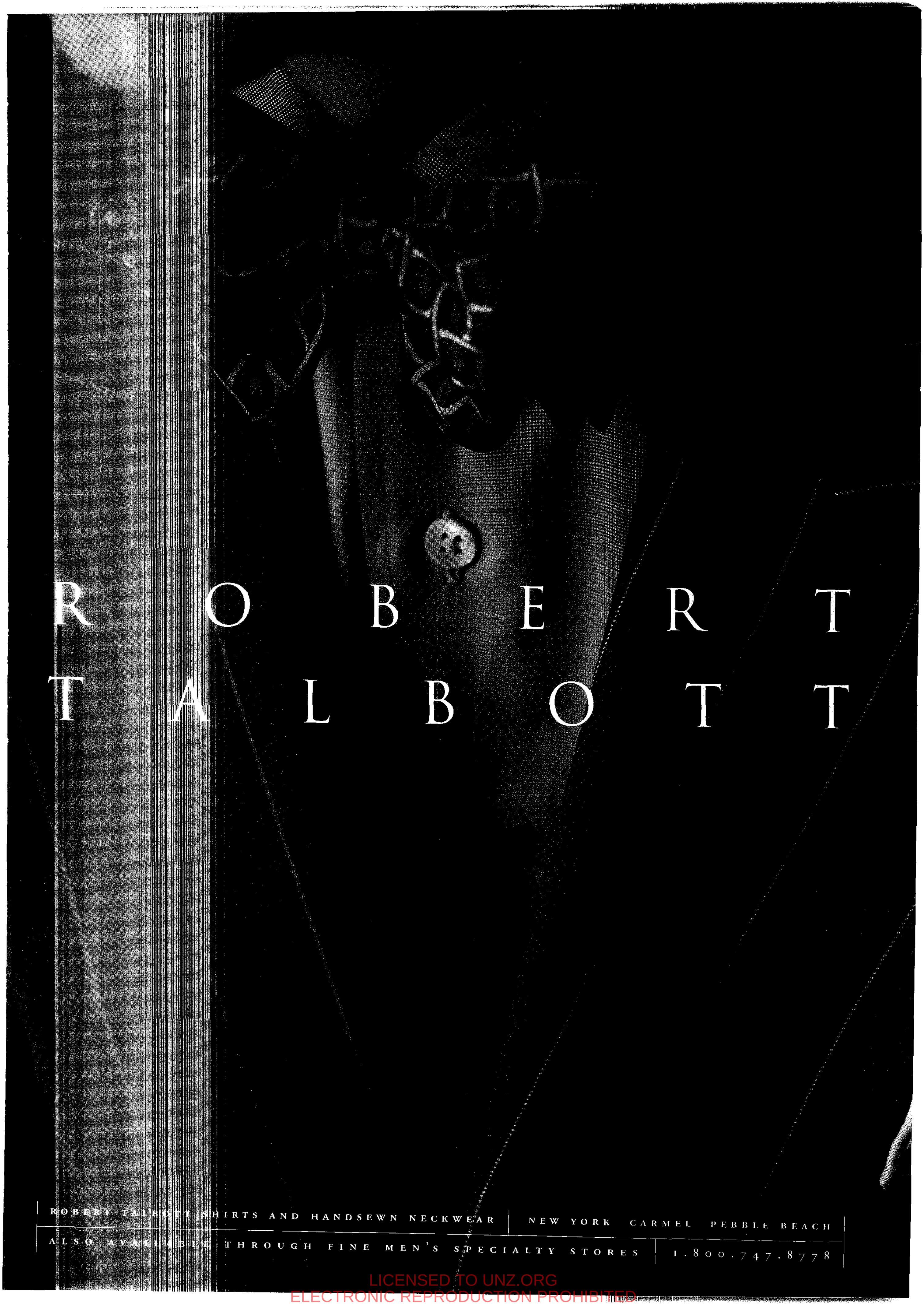


Many of the newest shapes in tailored clothing this fall—very fitted, with high armholes and high button stance—recall a past era but retain a decidedly modern pose. Advancing this somewhat extreme silhouette is **Gucci**, whose designer, Tom Ford, has demonstrated a progressive eye for fit and fabric. Gucci's latest "slim look" in suits (right) includes a six-button, double-breasted chalk-stripe suit with high-peaked lapels.



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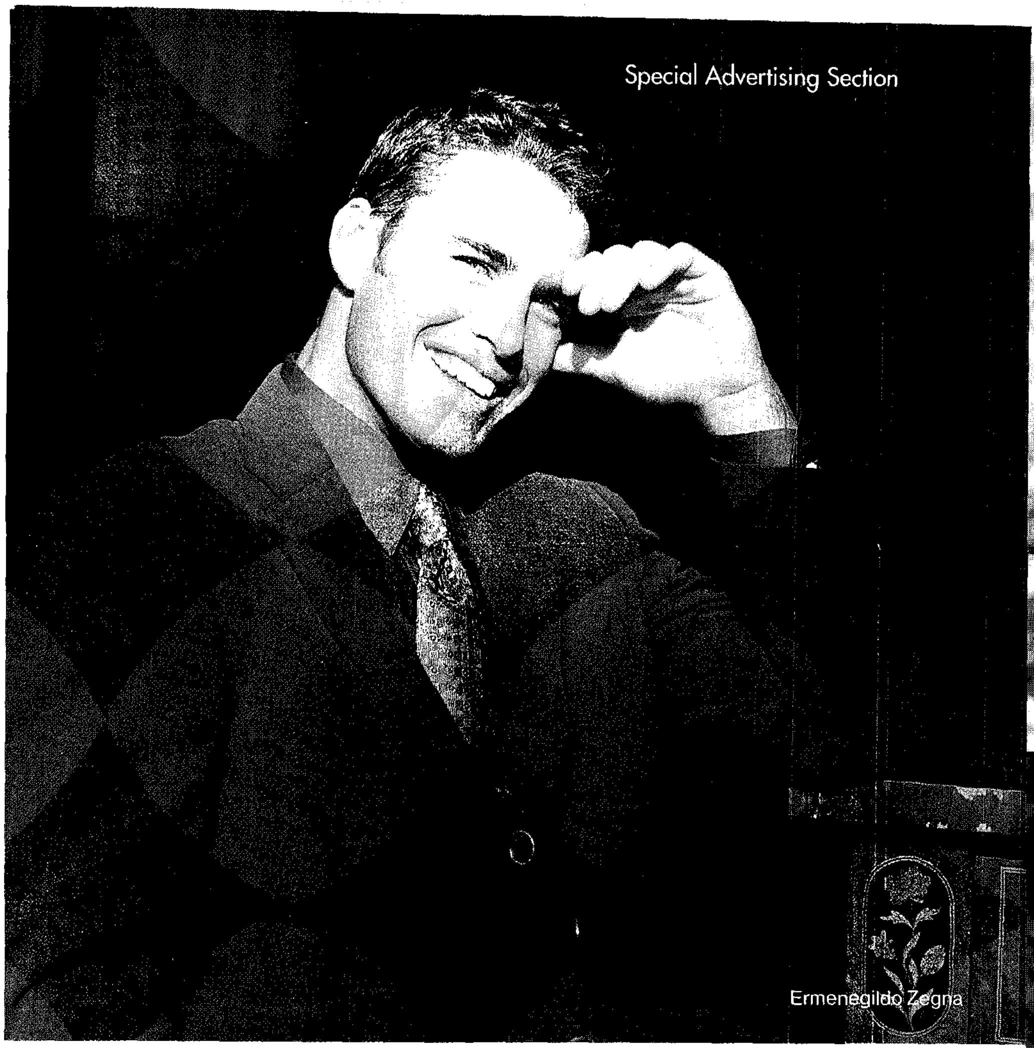
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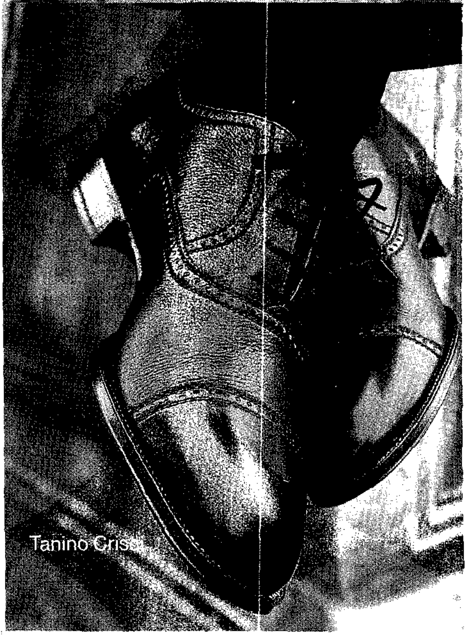
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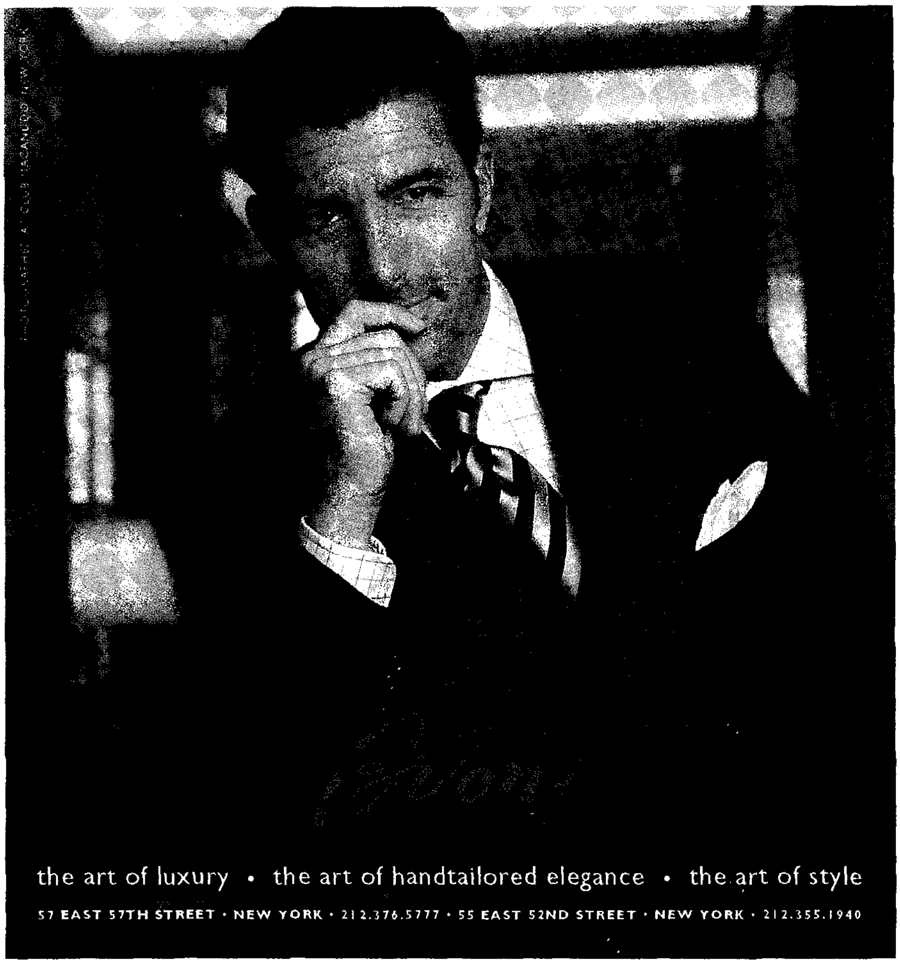
With the introduction of its Soft Collection in 1988, **Ermenegildo Zegna** was the first to bring a new sense of lightweight comfort to men's suits, a tailoring feat that has spawned a legion of imitators. Next spring, Zegna will debut the "Napoli" line of higher priced suits, tailored mostly by hand, with all the bespoke details and nuances rarely seen in off-the-rack. This Milan-based manufacturer has even won over Wall Street stalwarts who rarely ventured beyond American traditional. Classic Zegna is represented by the pure wool, hand-finished, three-button suit ***(far left)*** in deep teal—Italian style at its best.

Few men's accessories set off a well-tailored suit in quite the style of Carmel, California-based **Robert Talbott**. With single-needle tailoring throughout, and mother of pearl buttons top-stitched for strength, a Robert Talbott dress shirt is a model of elegance and quality that, with proper care, should last a lifetime. While the look of Robert Talbott ranges from traditional to cutting edge, the firm's new Welch Margetson British collection of shirts and ties ***(top left)*** represents the closest to bespoke haberdashery in the Savile Row tradition as ready-made furnishings can get.

American traditional clothing has its loyal followers and few in the business can rival the consistently updated style of **J. Press**. These days, country suits that travel well in town are prized and the "Press look" is much in demand. ***(Middle, left)*** A J. Press classic, updated for the nineties: Wool Donegal tweed three-piece suit with a "post-boy" lapelled vest.

A proper pair of well-made dress shoes is an important finish to a fine-tailored suit and **Tanino Crisci** is one of Italy's reigning shoe companies with a reputation for quality and style. Impeccably made, a Crisci shoe is always correct. Classic lace-up oxfords, in a range of tones, ***(bottom left, shown in black)*** are both elegant and comfortable, and complete the well-dressed look.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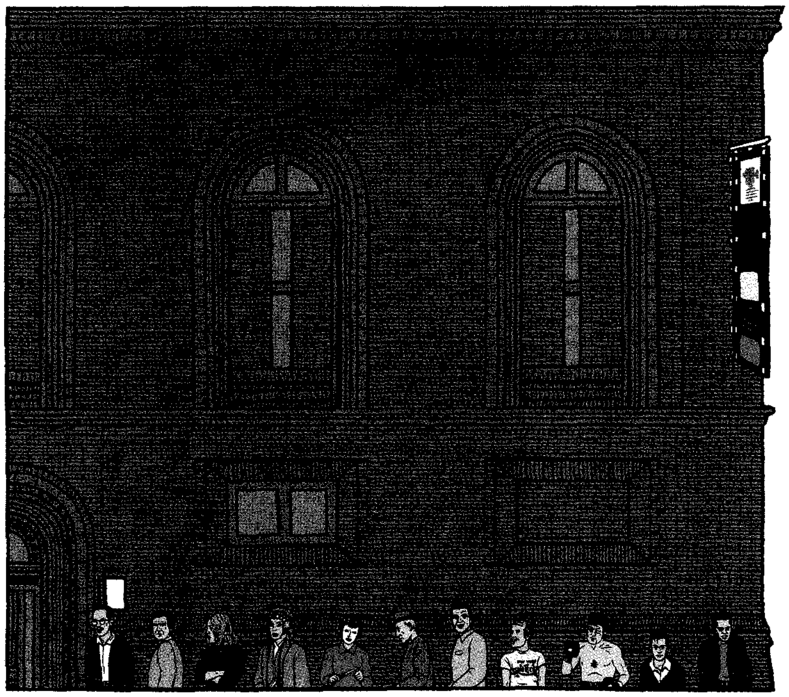


At Anthology Film Archives, a festival of independent films.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

dance, and was unusual in that it featured male dancers (Jacques d'Amboise, Tommy Rall, Marc Platt, Matt Mattox, Jeff Richards, and Russ Tamblyn), who are most memorable in the "Lonesome Polecat" ballet in the snow. The most prominent among the women is Julie Newmar (then Newmeyer). The choreography is by Michael Kidd; the script is by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett; the score is by Gene dePaul and Johnny Mercer.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 12.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Sept. 12: "House of Usher" (1960, Roger Corman), with Vincent Price, and "Masque of the Red Death" (1964, Corman), with Price. . . . Sept. 13-14: "Plan 9 from Outer Space" (1959, Edward D. Wood, Jr.), "Bride of the Monster" (1955, Wood), and "The Beast of Yucca Flats" (1961, Coleman Francis). . . . Sept. 15: "Black Sunday" (†) and "Hercules in the Haunted World" (1961, Mario Bava), with Reg Park. . . . Sept. 16: "Metropolis" (†) and "Woman in the Moon" (1929, Fritz Lang). . . . Sept. 17: "Robot Monster" (1953, Phil Tucker), "Cat Women of the Moon" (1954, Arthur Hilton), and "The Brain from Planet Arous" (1958, Nathan Hertz).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A showing of films from the museum's Martin Scorsese Collection. Sept. 12 at 2:30: "Murder by Contract" (1958, Irving Lerner), with Vince Edwards. . . . Sept. 12 at 6: "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" (†). . . . Sept. 13 at 2:30: "A Kiss Before Dying" (1956, Gerd Oswald), with Robert Wagner, Jeffrey Hunter, and Joanne Woodward. . . . Sept. 13 at 6 and Sept. 16 at 2:30: "Peeping Tom" (†). . . . Sept. 13 at 8 and Sept. 17 at 2:30: "Psycho" (†). . . . Sept. 14 at 2: "Torn Curtain" (1966, Alfred Hitchcock), with Paul Newman and Julie Andrews. . . . Sept. 14 at 6 and Sept. 17 at 6: "Point Blank" (†). . . . Sept. 15 at 1:30: "Home from the Hill" (1960, Vincente Minnelli), with Robert Mitchum, Eleanor Parker, George Peppard, and George Hamilton. . . . Sept. 15 at 5: "Pay or Die" (1960, Richard Wilson), with Ernest Borgnine. . . . Sept. 16 at 6: "Wind Across the Everglades" (1958, Nicholas Ray), with Burl Ives and Christopher Plummer.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Sept. 11 at 2 and 9 and Sept. 12 at 4: "Wattstax" (1973, Mel Stuart). . . . ¶ Sept. 11 at 4 and Sept. 12 at 2: "Wild Style" (1983, Charlie Ahearn). . . . ¶ Sept. 12 at 6:15: "The Life and Times of the Red Dog Saloon" (1996, Mary Works). . . . ¶ Sept. 12 at 9: "Hype!" (1995, Doug Pray). . . . ¶ Recent films from Taiwan, all in Taiwanese, with English subtitles. Sept. 13 at 2 and Sept. 14 at 4 and 8:45: "Tropical Fish" (Chen Yu-hsun). . . . Sept. 13 at 4:30 and 8:45, Sept. 14 at 6:30, and Sept. 15 at 6:15: "Good Men, Good Women" (Hou Hsiao-hsien). . . . Sept. 13 at 6:40 and Sept. 15 at 4:15 and 8:30: "The Peony Pavillion" (Chen Kuo-fu). . . . Sept. 16 at 2 and 6:15: "Super Citizen Ko" (Wan Jen). . . . Sept. 16 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Siao Yu" (Sylvia Chang). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Sept. 14-15 at 2: "Jim Thorpe—All American" (1951, Michael Curtiz), with Burt Lancaster.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Sept. 14 at 2: "Boxcar Bertha" (1972, Martin Scorsese), with Barbara Hershey and David Carradine. . . . Sept. 14 at 4: "Death Race 2000" (†). . . . Sept. 14 at 5:30: "The Lady in Red" (1979, Lewis Teague), with Pamela Sue Martin and Robert Conrad. . . . Sept. 15 at 2: "The Velvet Vampire" (1971, Stephanie Rothman), with Celeste Yarnall. . . . Sept. 15 at 4: "Love Letters" (1983, Amy Jones), with Jamie Lee Curtis and James Keach.

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 17 at 7: "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence" (1983, Nagisa Oshima), with David Bowie, Tom Conti, and Ryuichi Sakamoto. . . . Sept. 17 at 9:15: "Fires on the Plain" (†).

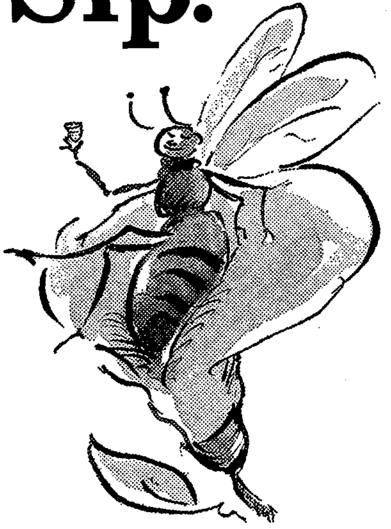
Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Through Sept. 15: A festival of international independent films.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 15 at 7, the feature will be "What's Up, Doc?" (1972, Peter Bogdanovich), with Barbra Streisand and Ryan O'Neal.

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—A program of African films. Sept. 11 at 3: "Guimba" (1993, Cheick Oumar Sissoko; Mali). . . . Sept. 11 at 6:30: "Keita" (1994, Dani Kouyate; Burkina Faso).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—"Karaoke" and "Cold Lazarus," the final works by writer Dennis Potter (1935-94), are being shown at the museum on a rotating basis. Sept. 12-13 at 6 and Sept. 14-15 at 2: "Karaoke" (1996, Renny Rye), with Albert Finney, Saffron Burrows, and Hywel Bennett.

Sip.



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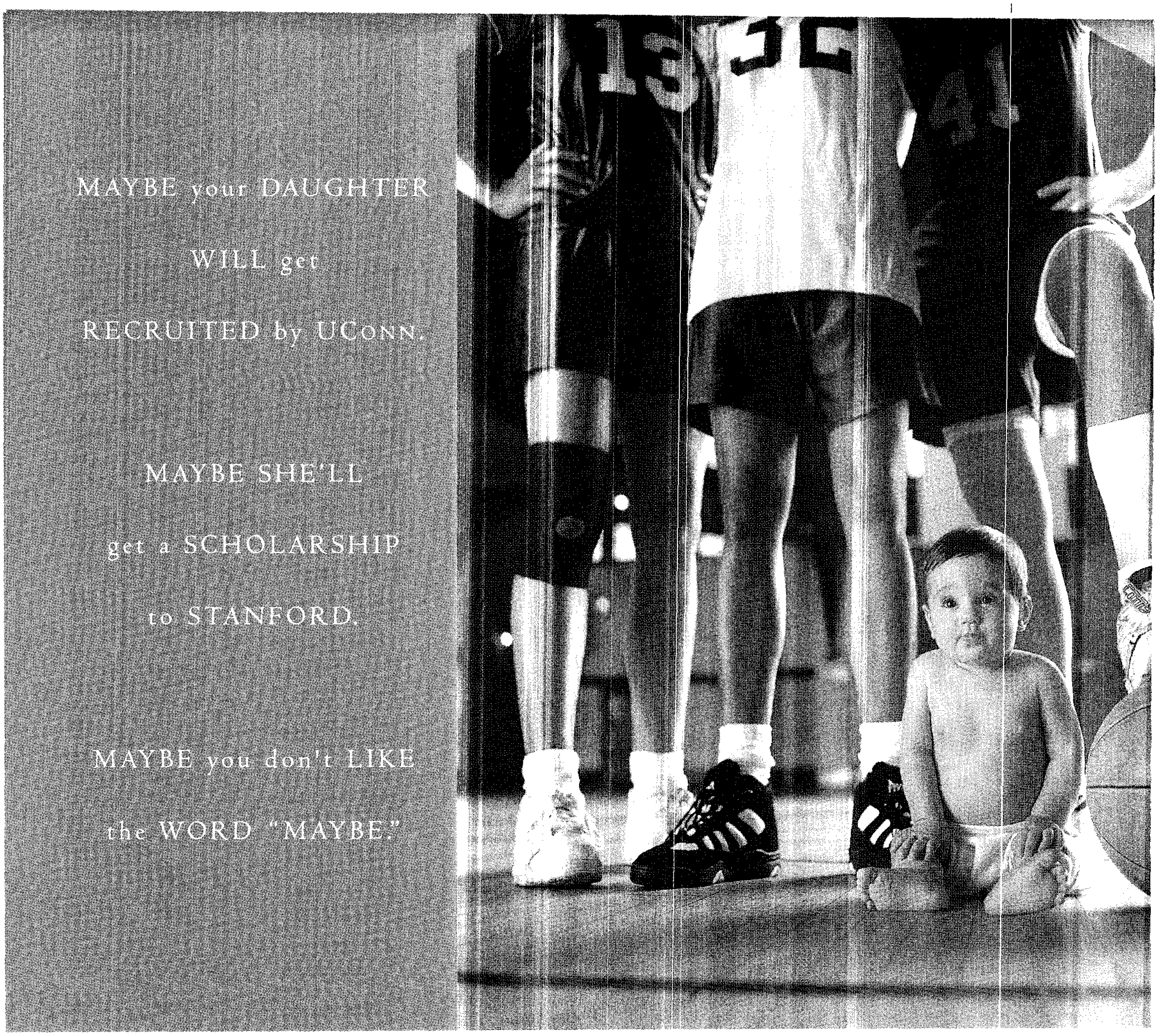
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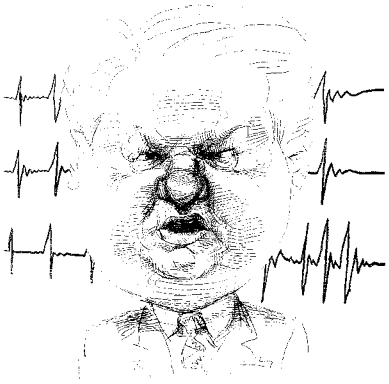
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE HEART OF THE STORY

So far, Sergei Parkhomenko, Russia's best investigative journalist and the editor-in-chief of the newsweekly *Itogi*, has not broken any stories on the foot fetishes of Kremlin imagemakers, but, thanks in part to his latest scoop detailing the heart problems of Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President has, after months of resistance, finally decided to go ahead with a bypass operation.

Parkhomenko's cover story, which will appear on newsstands in Moscow this week, includes doctors saying that if Yeltsin had not agreed to surgery to unclog the arteries around his heart he would be dead within two years. "By investigating the story, we pushed the process," Parkhomenko said from *Itogi's* offices in Moscow. "I'm seriously convinced that the part of Yeltsin's inner circle, including his daughter Tatyana, that wanted him to consent to the operation but were failing to convince him took advantage of this piece to prove to Yeltsin that secrecy was nonsensical. He had to move. He had to do something."



Boris Yeltsin

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VICTOR JUHASZ

Parkhomenko is only thirty-two, but he is already considered a role model for the generation of reporters who began their careers as the Soviet Union was collapsing. Until the glasnost period of the late eighties, Parkhomenko limited his journalistic career to theatre criticism, the better to avoid the usual compromises in an atmosphere of censorship. But in 1991, as the old regime was in free fall, he joined a new paper called *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, and in the aftermath of the August putsch he broke a hilarious story about the fake beards, mustaches, and passports kept in the safes at Communist Party headquarters. Two years later, during the bloody showdown between Yeltsin and the Parliament, Parkhomenko was the one reporter resourceful enough to get inside the Kremlin; in fact, he managed to get there before Yeltsin himself and witnessed the absolute chaos of the government at a moment of crisis.

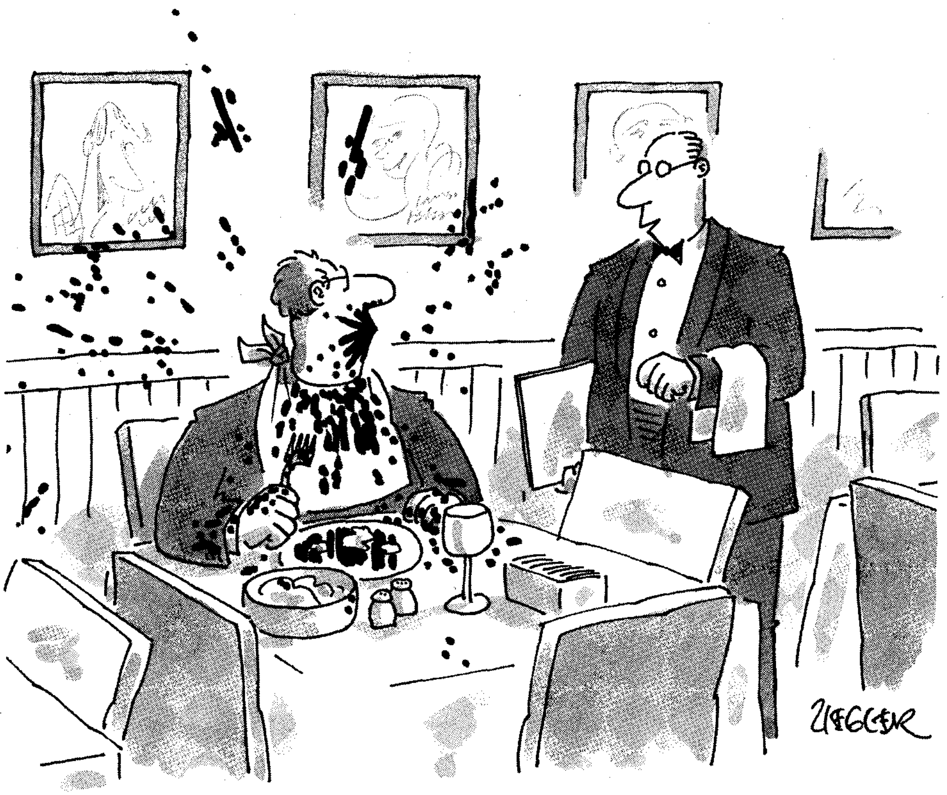
Last year, Parkhomenko left daily newspapering and agreed to edit *Itogi* ("summing up"), a magazine financed by the banker Vladimir Gusinsky. The idea was to create a Russian equivalent of *Newsweek*, which agreed to help with editorial advice and international advertising. During the Presidential campaign this spring, *Itogi* was one of the few publications in Moscow to attempt fair coverage of both Yeltsin and the Communists.

But until now even *Itogi* would not touch the last taboo of Russian journalism: the health of the czar. In Soviet times, no reporter would have bothered confronting a censor with information about Lenin's strokes (which left him incapacitated in his final years), Stalin's withered arm, or the multitudinous infirmities of Comrades Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko. And, while Western papers have for years written about Yeltsin's myriad infirmities, the Russian press has more often quoted the fibs of Presidential spokesmen. Not long ago, with Yeltsin struggling just to make it through his own inaugural ceremony, one of his aides, Georgy Satarov, said that the President was not so much sick as "colossally weary."

Finally, as Yeltsin's condition worsened, Parkhomenko decided that *Itogi* had to get the real story of the President's health. "When I realized there was no point in trying to get news from Yeltsin's press office, I began looking elsewhere," he said. "At first, I was given a piece of information by a woman who contacted me on her own initiative. She is a medical biologist, and she learned about what was going on through friends. Then I followed a chain of physicians and got progressively closer to the real story. It turns out that cardio-surgeons in Moscow are a rather small, close circle, and everyone was well aware of the problem Yeltsin suffers from."

Parkhomenko discovered not only that Yeltsin was reluctant to undergo surgery but also that the few doctors capable of performing the operation were none too enthusiastic about taking on the responsibility. The doctor who will perform the surgery—Rinat Akchurin, a Tatar who lives in Moscow—turns out to be quite experienced in the realm of politics: he performed bypass surgery on the Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin (another state secret until now).

Finally, Yeltsin told *Itogi*, "I need an operation, and I won't drag this out any longer."



"How's the squid?"

• •

A GRASS-ROOTS MURDOCH

It's no secret that Rupert Murdoch conducts his billion-dollar business from a steel-and-glass fortress in midtown, but in a funky Tribeca loft situated between a porn shop and a falafel joint Murdoch's twenty-three-year-old son, James, is toiling in undergraduate squalor. The loft is the headquarters of Rawkus Entertainment, an independent record label started last year by the media tycoon's younger son and two high-school friends, Jarret Myer and Brian Brater. Though James Murdoch and his colleagues have never actually run a record company—he's a Harvard dropout, and Myer and Brater used to play in acid-jazz bands—they've already established an aggressively alternative roster that includes the Rose Family, a hip-hop group from Brooklyn, and the glam-metal bands Whorgasm and Motorbaby. Having signed six acts in less than two years, Rawkus is clearly, in the words of the Hollywood *Reporter*, a "feisty new diskery."

"I don't want to be cocky," the American-accented James Murdoch said the other day, "but we're fast learners. You learn pretty quickly when you're spending money and not getting results." He cast a knowing eye around Rawkus's makeshift boardroom, which was festooned with marketing maps, sales reports, empty Marlboro cartons, and several half-eaten lunches. Lanky, myopic, and dressed in a moth-eaten sweater and thrift-shop corduroys, the young Murdoch exuded a guileless, I'll-wash-my-hair-one-of-these-days charm. Though his ears reddened at the mention of his father, he set his jaw and discussed nepotism with the mild irritation of someone who will be answering certain questions for the rest of his life—questions, for example, such as whether Rupert Murdoch, of News International Corporation, has any connection with James Murdoch, of Rawkus Entertainment.

"Sure," James Murdoch said.

And what might that be?

"Well, he's my dad." He laughed. "Other than that, he has nothing to do with us at all."

"He's smart like his father," Brater added helpfully.

Is Rawkus a vanity operation?

"No," James Murdoch said firmly. "This is our business. We're here at ten and we leave at midnight. Listen to our stuff—the proof is in the pudding."

"Do we occasionally have a fancy meal?" Brater said. "Of course we do. But look at James. Does he *look* like a rich kid? This is a totally grass-roots, underground, from-the-bottom operation."

"We're doing things that no other company would let us do in a million years," Murdoch continued. "We make mistakes, but at the same time it's great. We're essentially just putting out the music we like. And the material we're getting from our artists is—"

"Ridiculous," Brater interrupted.

"—better than most of the stuff that's out there. We're very excited."

Would James Murdoch ever call Rupert Murdoch if things got out of hand?

"Well," James Murdoch sighed, "he is my father. I've been asking him for advice ever since I was a kid. But we intend to remain independent."

FOOTBALL SCHOLARSHIP

As the N.F.L. settles into its third week, it might be worth considering the implications of one of the events of last season; namely, the relocation of the Cleveland Browns to Baltimore. The team needed a new name, and after great private and public deliberation the decision was made to call it the Ravens. The explanation behind this less than obvious choice is that Baltimore is where Edgar Allan Poe is buried, and Poe wrote "The Raven." Q.E.D. Baltimore's decision raises a question for New Yorkers: In an era of nomadic football teams, what would happen if one came here and its owners chose to copy Baltimore and name the team after something by a local writer? What writer would provide the new name?

With Herman Melville, you could call the team the Great White Whales, which would be fine if the linemen were sufficiently wide-bodied. Choosing Henry James would let you call the team the Ambassadors, which would be big with the United Nations set. The Knickerbockers is already taken, so picking Washington Irving would force you to fall back on the Headless Horsemen, which has a nice grisly ring to it. Similarly, selecting Edna St. Vincent Millay would let you call the team the Beasts That Rend Me in the Sight of All, which suggests that she would have been a big fan of the great Lawrence Taylor, who perhaps was seeking a similarly poetic moment when he admitted that he liked hitting a quarterback so hard that a snot bubble appeared at the end of his nose. (Calling the team the Candles—in reference to Millay's line about hers burning at both ends—would be O.K. only if you had a lot of two-way players like Deion Sanders.)

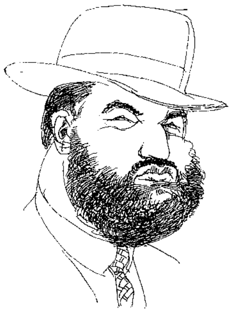
Shrewd as the Baltimoreans were in picking a writer who is dead (nobody whining about royalties, or bylines on the scoreboard, no insistence on reading from a work-in-progress at halftime), a new New York football team would certainly want to consider celebrating the combative, bulldog qualities of the very much alive Norman Mailer. No doubt a name like the American Dreams would have that cocky, showboat quality New Yorkers love, although should there ever be two teams in New York that need renaming, the solution is plain: one dreams of a Super Bowl in which the New York Naked play the New York Dead.

The literary team name that best conjures up the spirit of the city these days, however, comes from Allen Ginsberg: let's hear it for the New York Howl. Imagine turning on the TV for the opening kickoff of a game against the New Orleans Streetcars or the Los Angeles Big Sleeps. The whistle blows, and as the line moves forward the fans erupt in an unearthly wailing. Then, as the bodies untangle, John Madden says, "Just look at the replay, Pat! Look, you can see the best ligaments of a generation destroyed—*pow!*—by that hit from ol' No. 76 there!"

BROTHER'S KEEPER

NORMAN ROSENBAUM has flown back and forth between Australia and New York City forty-one times since his brother Yankel was murdered, in the Crown Heights riots five years ago. His most recent trip ended early this month, and when he flew home to Melbourne for the High Holidays it seemed altogether possible that he might never have to come back here again. In August, the United States Attorney in Brooklyn announced the arrest of a second man in the Rosenbaum case, which meant that the man thought to have stabbed Yankel, Lemrick Nelson, Jr., and the man thought to have incited the mob that surrounded him, Charles Price, were both under indictment on federal civil-rights charges. (Both men have pleaded not guilty. Nelson was acquitted of state murder charges in 1992.)

On August 19th, the day he flew in from Australia, Rosenbaum said Kaddish—the Jewish prayer of mourning—for his brother at a special ceremony in Crown Heights marking the anniversary of the riots. For five years, he has devoted himself to the pursuit of justice for his brother—lobbying politicians, writing letters, speaking on television and radio, and tirelessly keeping the case alive—and all of a sudden it looked as if his efforts had brought a kind of closure. Except that to Norman Rosenbaum things are not that simple. "This is an indictment that should have occurred years ago," he said on the phone from his office in Melbourne, still as angry and as indignant as the day he arrived here in 1991. "There was a mob that surrounded my brother, all of whom are equally culpable before the law, and there is no reason that more than these two men have not been arrested." Rosenbaum talks quickly and passionately, in the complete sentences of someone who has been over his territory many times before. "I believe that there is still the opportunity and the need to do a comprehensive investigation."


Norman Rosenbaum

Rosenbaum, a burly thirty-nine-year-old with a full, graying beard, is the father of four, with a thriving international-law practice and a teaching post at the University of Melbourne law school. Since 1991, he has spent about eight months out of every year in Brooklyn, which means that he has been a father to his children largely by phone and fax, and after a day's work in the service of his brother's memory he has often stayed up all night on the phone in the service of his clients back home. "We knew there would be sacrifice, because you can't be two places at once," he said, conceding that he is in a state of perpetual exhaustion.

"To him it is still fresh," Rabbi Shea Hecht, a close friend whom Rosenbaum often stays with in New York, said recently. "When people say, 'Come on, let's go already, forget about it, let's move on,' it brings out in him a puzzlement. Justice is justice. Why should we let killers walk the streets?" Rabbi Hecht noted that he doesn't know when Rosenbaum will stop, when he will consider that justice has been done. "I've asked him that question, and I'll give you his answer, but I don't know if that answer is the full answer. He says that he wants some assurance in his head that it can't happen again."

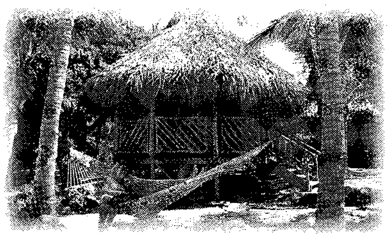
Rosenbaum himself put it more bluntly: "I'm going to make sure the system works, whether they want it to or not. Will I be back? You bet your life."

THE CELLULAR AGE

A MAN was standing at the corner of Fifty-sixth and Lexington a few weeks ago waiting for the "Walk" sign to appear. Next to him was a woman who said very distinctly, "Margaret, I will have nothing to do with that man or his dog." Since only the two of them were waiting at the curb, he assumed that she was talking into a cellular phone. "How common it is these days," he said later, "to hear people chatting away in buses, or striding along the sidewalk talking quite loudly, apparently to themselves—behavior that, if it weren't for the little handheld sets, would be an easy ticket to the loony bin." He went on to say that he had looked over idly and was surprised to see that the woman was not holding a cellular phone but was, in fact, talking into a cupped hand held close to her ear, her little finger aloft in simulation of an antenna. "That's right," he said. "She was carrying on an imaginary conversation into an imaginary phone."

That was not the end of it. When she caught him staring at her, she reached up with her free hand, folded the little finger—the "antenna"—down into her fist, and guided the whole into the pocket of her suit jacket. "What was surprising," the man said, "was that I had to hold back from apologizing for eavesdropping." ♦

"The Heart of the Story," David Remnick; "A Grass-Roots Murdoch," Andrew Essex; "Football Scholarship," Jamie Malanowski; "Brother's Keeper," Malcolm Gladwell; "The Cellular Age," George Plimpton.



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LETTER FROM THE WEST BANK

BATTLING OVER ABRAHAM

Why the Israelis won't leave Hebron.

BY AMY WILENTZ

In downtown Hebron, four streets meet at odd, gaping angles to form what was called Policeman Square before the Israelis took over the town in 1967, after the Six-Day War. There used to be a uniformed police officer there, trying to direct the traffic and establish some order, but now the cars—mostly fifties Peugeots that have been turned into taxis, with curtained windows to keep out the sun—inch through the gridlock on their own. Policemen don't police this part of Hebron. The men in charge are Israel Defense Force soldiers, who wear red berets or blue baseball caps and hunker down along the side streets, keeping as low a profile as possible. The I.D.F. soldiers are sporadically on the receiving end of stones and chunks of concrete thrown from the rubble-strewn roofs of unfinished or abandoned buildings around Policeman Square. The pelting is less organized than it was during the Intifada, but the new generation of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds who are egged on by leaflets exhorting them to "burn the land under the feet of the Nazi occupiers" are no less enthusiastic than their predecessors.

Praying at the Tomb of the Patriarchs: An ancient controversy threatens the Oslo accords.

ED KASHI

Hebron, a hill town that sits among vineyards and olive groves on the West Bank, is a traditional locus of zealotry, vengeance, and massacre. It is the only place in the occupied territories where Jews and Palestinians live side by side, and it is the last West Bank town from which the Israeli Army is supposed to withdraw—or, in the language of the diplomats, "redeploy"—under the terms of the Oslo accords. The soldiers were supposed to leave in March, but the deadline was moved back more than once by Shimon Peres during the election campaign this spring; then, after Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister, he, too, put off the Hebron redeployment, saying he wanted to renegotiate the terms of an agreement that had always been unacceptable to him. So the boys who carry on the informal Intifada keep scooting up onto the roofs and lobbing bits of debris on passing Israeli soldiers, occasionally drawing blood and sometimes getting arrested.

Hebron has a population of about a hundred and twenty thousand, of whom four hundred are Jews living in a settlement just off Policeman Square, in an old Jewish quarter that was abandoned in 1929, when Arabs massacred scores of its inhabitants. After the Six-Day War, Jews began trickling back to the town, and now Jewish settlers occupy ancient houses crowned with two or three new stories and with garlands of shiny razor wire. Heavily padlocked steel gates lead into the settlement, and metal bars with small spikes in them have been laid across some of the access roads to prevent cars from entering. Non-Jewish traffic is blocked off by Israeli soldiers in watchtowers and sentry booths, while settlers, with their machine guns, pistols, cellular telephones, and gaggles of kids, pass through unquestioned in big Jeeps and Mitsubishi Monteros and Volvo station wagons. In a vacant lot that Palestinians mockingly call "the Hebron zoo," settler children wander among chickens and turkeys, scattering feed. The lot became available when the Israeli Army razed several Arab houses from whose roofs Palestinians had machine-gunned and grenaded a group of settlers, including some yeshiva students, in 1980.

The Jews are drawn to Hebron by a massive stone structure on the other side of the settlement from Policeman Square. They call the building the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and the Muslims call it the Ibrahimi Mosque. It is a holy site for both religions. Without the Tomb, there would be no settlers in Hebron to slash Palestinian tires and throw Molotov cocktails at Arab establishments. Without the soldiers who protect the settlers, there would be no Israeli Army to aim rocks at in the middle of town.

Before the Six-Day War, Muslims had controlled the town and the Tomb for about seven hundred years. Then, between 1967 and 1994, Jews and Muslims shared the sanctuary according to an agreed-upon daily schedule. This arrangement was deemed to be unworkable two years ago, after Dr. Baruch Goldstein, formerly of Brooklyn, burst into the building during predawn prayers in Ramadan, the holiest Islamic month, and killed twenty-nine Muslims before his head was smashed in with a fire extinguisher by enraged survivors. The Israeli government imposed a curfew to quell the ensuing disturbances, cleaned the blood off the prayer rugs, plugged the bullet holes that scored the marble columns and elaborately decorated plaster walls of the interior, divided the sanctuary, and set up two separate entrances. The mosque side is now accessible only to non-Jews, and the Jewish side only to non-Muslims. (The walls on the Jewish side are still illuminated with Arabic calligraphy in enormous, formal, arching script.) The road that runs from Policeman Square past the settlement to the sanctuary is closed to Arab traffic.

A few days ago, I slipped through the three checkpoints on the mosque side of the Tomb by allowing a Muslim friend who accompanied me to allege to the Israeli guards that I was a Christian. Inside, I covered my head and took off my shoes and knelt on a prayer rug. I put my forehead on the cool marble floor and peered through a metal grating down a chute that drops fifty feet beneath the mosque. Four candles were burning faintly on the floor below. Both the Bible and the Quran hold that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with their wives, are buried somewhere down there in a subterranean cave. According to the account in Genesis, Abraham bought the cave from Ephron, a Hittite landowner, for four hundred silver shekels.

But who was Abraham? Jews, even secular Jews (along with most Christians), hold that Abraham is the patriarch of the people of Israel. Muslims believe that Abraham—who lived long before the time of Moses, and before Judaism was accepted as a system of law and belief—was a prophet of Islam. Through his son Ishmael, who was born before Sarah's son Isaac, and whose mother was Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian handmaiden, he is the patriarch of the Arab peoples. It is this ancient contradiction that fuels the present conflict over Hebron, and that won't be resolved by redeployment, which the Oslo accords define as a pullout by the Israelis from eighty-five per cent of the town.

For Israeli conservatives like General Ariel Sharon, who is Netanyahu's Minister of Infrastructure in the new Likud government, eighty-five per cent is too much—too much more than zero, which is what he and Hebron's Jewish settlers would prefer. Even before Netanyahu began talking directly with Yasir Arafat last week, Sharon objected to what he sees as a capitulation regarding Hebron, and to the fact that he and other hard-liners were not being given a prominent enough role in the negotiations with the Palestinians. "The subject of Hebron was

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one of the main reasons I joined the government," he complained. For the Muslims of Hebron and the greater Islamic world, on the other hand, an eighty-five-per-cent withdrawal is not enough. "Redeployment won't solve anything, really," a friend of mine from Hebron said recently, "because the Israelis will always keep soldiers here to guard the settlers and the Tomb."

THE walls of the present Tomb of the Patriarchs were built by the Jewish King Herod at the dawn of the Christian era. A millennium earlier, David had ruled Judea from Hebron. After the Biblical period, most of Hebron's Jews were sent into exile, but by the end of the second century B.C. they were once again the dominant group. The Jews were defeated by the Romans late in the first century A.D., and a church was built over the Cave of Machpelah, the Biblical name for the double cave in which the patriarchs are said to be buried. Hebron was taken by the Arabs in 638, and the church over the cave was converted into a mosque.

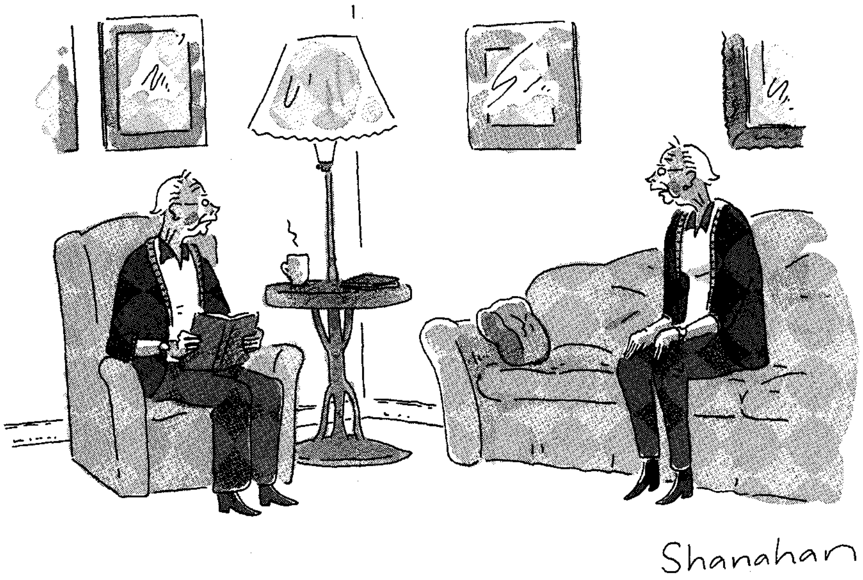
Few early visits to the cave have been recorded. One of the earliest Muslim accounts comes from the tenth century. A man named Abu Bakr al-Askafi tells of the contributions he made to the mosque so that he could enter the double cave and see the tomb of Abraham, whom Muslims call the Friend of God, or Khalil. (The Arabic name for Hebron is al-Khalil.) With a guide named Saluk, Abu Bakr descended seventy-two steps into the cavern, where he saw a bier built of stone and a body on it: "The body of an aged man, lying on his back, long-bearded and hairy of cheek, with clothes of a green color." Saluk informs Abu Bakr that this is Isaac. On another bier, another body is extended, "the hair on his breast already whitened with age, and his head, and beard, and eyebrows, and eyelashes white also." This is Abraham.

In the twelfth century, the Crusaders captured Hebron and converted the mosque back into a church; a hundred and sixty years later, the Mamluks, an Islamic people, retook Hebron. It was the Mamluks who first declared the sanctuary and the Cave of Machpelah off limits to Jews, and that prohibition extended throughout the four centuries of Ottoman rule, right through the British mandate in Palestine, which began in 1917. Under the mandate, Jews could approach the Tomb of the Patriarchs only as far as the seventh step on the external stairway.

Over the centuries, the Islamic authorities allowed few Europeans into the underground sanctuary. In 1862, Edward, Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, was admitted with a small entourage. In 1869, the Crown Prince of Prussia and the Imperial Prince of Russia, later Nicholas II, were allowed a brief visit. Occasionally, a royal group would bring along a covert archeological expert, but the visits were never long enough for close inspection.

One of the earliest recorded accounts of a European exploring the cave was made in November, 1917, when a British occupation detachment arrived in Hebron. The chief political officer, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, roamed through the building and stopped for a moment to appreciate the majestic cenotaphs that stood inside small inner rooms decorated with gorgeous Arabic inscriptions. Meinertzhagen was standing near Abraham's cenotaph when he noticed a small door half open. The door led into a dark and rock-strewn hallway that seemed to fall off from the opening at a forty-five-degree angle. Stumbling and sliding down this corridor, Meinertzhagen suddenly found himself in a subterranean redoubt only a few yards wide. There was little light in the chamber, and cracks in the floor seemed to speak of the place's antiquity; the irregular walls were covered with a copious layer of dust and smoke. At the end of the room, a big block of stone, or massive piece of masonry, stood like a morgue slab in a corner. The sides and the top were smoky and stained with ritual oils and the remains of burned incense. After taking a quick turn about the dark room, Meinertzhagen rushed up and out into daylight and fresh air. It was only later that he realized that the sombre place he had stumbled upon was the usually inaccessible cave where the patriarchs of the Bible were supposedly entombed.

After the Israelis took the West Bank from the Jordanians in 1967, General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Minister of Defense, went to the mosque. Israelis tell of how he sent a skinny twelve-year-old girl down the chute in the mosque floor into what many supposed was the cave (but seems to have been a subterranean sanctuary one level above the burial rooms). Running down a long corridor to a small, dank room, she found nothing but a plaque on a greasy wall with an Arabic inscription on it. (According to the current keepers of the mosque, the oxygen below the surface was too thin for the child, and she had to be pulled up precipitately.) Muhammad Tamimi, a guide who has been working at the mosque for thirty years, says that once, eighteen years ago, he descended to the first level. He believes that no one (except, perhaps, Colonel Meinertzhagen) has been down to the lower level in hundreds of years; Tamimi says that even if he were permitted to, he would not explore it because it is the resting place of the prophets. "Six hundred or seven hundred years ago,



"I don't know you anymore, Ira."

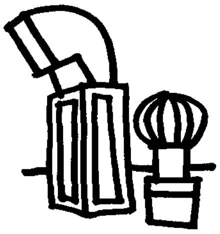
someone went down there, and he saw Sarah," Tamimi told me. "She was brushing her hair. She looked at him and said, 'You shall be blind.' And he was blinded. The prophets don't really die."

According to the accounts of Jewish settlers, some twelve years after General Dayan sent the girl down the chute, and long after he had handed back control of the sanctuary to its Muslim keepers, a group of settlers paid off the cave's guards and slithered below the mosque. They say that they went farther and deeper than the girl had, and they claim that they discovered two caves—the double cave—with platforms in them and bones scattered about. But they had to leave before they could explore further. The *waqf,* the religious organization that safeguards the mosque, found out about the settlers' intrusion, and the entry to the cave was subsequently cemented over.

The controversy over Hebron keeps circling back to the question of Abraham. Jews know the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, in which God orders Abraham to sacrifice his son as an offering to the Lord and as an avowal of perfect fealty to Him. He then stays Abraham's hand at the last moment, sparing Isaac. In the Quranic version of this story, Ishmael, rather than Isaac, is the son who is threatened and then saved. Abraham and Ishmael build the Kaaba, the Islamic holy shrine at Mecca, and begin to worship there. "Jews have no religious relation to Abraham," says Sheikh Taysir Tamimi, the head of Hebron's Shariah court, which arbitrates in questions of Islamic law. "The relation between us and the prophets is religious. In the Quran it says that Muhammad developed what Abraham started." According to tradition, one of Tamimi's ancestors, the olive-oil merchant Tamim al-Dari, lived at the time of Muhammad and was given the municipality of Hebron by the Prophet himself. There are hundreds of Tamimis in Hebron—among them the guide at the mosque who told me about Sarah brushing her hair.

It is easy to imagine that Tamim would not have looked much different from the contemporary Sheikh Tamimi, with his maroon fez wrapped in white, his white djellabah, his clever face. The Sheikh is known in Hebron as a supporter of Hamas, the militant Islamic organization that has nurtured many of the people involved in terrorist actions against Israelis in recent years, including the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv suicide bombings in February and March. More than fifty per cent of Hebronites say they identify themselves with Hamas—which translates as "zeal" in Arabic—although only a small number are involved in what the group calls "military actions."

"These days, the Israelis close the mosque whenever they wish," Sheikh Tamimi says. "They give unacceptable reasons: they want to see the security plans, they want to fix something here, something there. The real reason is that they are making a policy to stop Muslims from going to the Ibrahimi Mosque, so that it becomes usual for us to be forbidden. Anyway, it is improper under Quranic law for two religions to worship in one place, and this has been an Islamic mosque since the beginning of Islam. Jews should not be in the mosque. If you go inside the mosque, everything says it's Muslim. Yet the Jews now have twice as much room there as we have. Hebron has been quiet because people hope peace will come and the economy will get better, but if nothing changes they will go back to the old ways. I can't know exactly what will happen, but something will explode."



On David Wilder's desk in Avraham Avinu, the Jewish settlement in downtown Hebron, there is a gift box with a cover of clear plastic, and inside is a collector's silver coin with a bas-relief of the Tomb of the Patriarchs on it. The words "The Jewish City of Hebron" are engraved along its edge. On the back of the coin is another motto: "400 silver shekels." Beneath this is a Biblical quotation that reads, "And the title to the field and the cave in it was made over to Abraham—Genesis."

"Look," says Wilder, who is a frequent spokesman for the Hebron settlers. "You go back two thousand years, and Herod, the King of the Jews, built that massive building there in that spot—and no place else—for a reason." Wilder has a pistol tucked into the back of his trousers and the ritual *tzitzit* tassels of the Orthodox peeking out from beneath his shirt. Between his tassels and his gun is his beeper. Like most of the settlers, Wilder is a cynic when it comes to assessing Arab motivation. "For them, anything that has historical Jewish importance is a mosque," he says. "What does 'mosque' mean? This building was built about six hundred years before Muhammad was born." Wilder says he lives with his wife and seven children in Kiryat Arba, a large settlement on the outskirts of Hebron, because there is no space left in Avraham Avinu. "We won back the Cave of Machpelah in the 1967 war, and then Moshe Dayan for some reason gave the keys back to the Arabs. He had no Jewish education." Wilder's tone is dismissive. "Now the Arabs have almost twice as much room inside as we do," he says. (What is certain is that, as one Palestinian put it, "they got Jacob and Leah, Abraham and Sarah. We only got Isaac and Rebecca.")

There is a map of post-redeployment Hebron—as envisioned by the Oslo agreements—that Wilder likes to hand out. The little black-and-white photocopy shows the center of Hebron after redeployment, and how easily a rocket attack could be launched from formerly protected areas into what would remain of the defended Jewish settlement. Dotted lines show the rockets' presumed trajectories, and a ragged star of explosion marks each supposedly vulnerable spot, including, naturally, the courtyard of the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

"We've never said the Arabs have to leave Hebron in order for us to live here," Wilder points out, "even though that's what they say about the Jews. But Hebron is a Jewish city. We oppose redeployment. We learned a lesson about living in trust with the Arabs in 1929, a lesson we will never forget."

In 1929, under the influence of the anti-Zionist leadership in Jerusalem, Hebron's Arab population turned on the venerable Jewish community in the old city, and sixty-seven people were killed—among them students from Philadelphia and Chicago, as well as women and small children. Hundreds were wounded, holy books were burned, and a tradition of peaceful coexistence was, it seems, irrevocably destroyed. Many Jews were killed by Arab neighbors they had known for a lifetime. Others were sheltered by Muslim friends.

In Beit Hadassah, the apartment complex in front of which the yeshiva students were gunned down by Palestinians in 1980, there is a one-room museum that tells the story of the Jewish presence in Hebron over the centuries. The most moving exhibit, in a display dedicated to making the settlers' case, is a sort of pictographic altar to the dead of the 1929 massacre. The men and women of Hebron's Jewish community appear prosperous and well integrated into the life of the city. The people in the photographs do not have the hungry, forlorn, alienated look of the Polish ghetto Jews photographed by Roman Vishniac a few years later. Among the rabbis and yeshiva students and rabbis' wives are many plump businessmen and contented matrons.

The Jews don't let you forget their massacre, but then neither do the Arabs let you forget theirs. "This for us was the ultimate thing," says Amir, a twenty-four-year-old veteran of the Intifada. Amir lost several relatives in Baruch Goldstein's attack on the Tomb in 1994. "To be shot by a Jew in our own place of worship, where he has no business at all anyway—it was more than we could stand." Amir points to the division of the mosque, the closing of the Palestinian vegetable market nearby, and the shutting off of crosstown streets as evidence that, he says, "we were being punished for having been massacred."

Among the settlers, the primary response to the 1994 massacre does not seem to be regret or sorrow. "None of us ever thought that something like this could happen," Noam Arnon, a leading member of the Hebron Jewish settlement, says. "I object totally to what Baruch did, but I will say in explanation—not in justification—that he was a doctor who ran from one terror victim to the next, sometimes saving them, sometimes not, and finally something broke in him. It was a tough time for the community here, mentally and physically." In Kiryat Arba, there is a memorial to Baruch Goldstein.

Some Palestinians talk about massacres of Israelis in much the same language that Arnon uses to explain Goldstein's actions. In the al-Fawar refugee camp, just a few miles outside Hebron, the family of Majdi Abu-Wardeh lives in a big house the first floor of which has been torn up by the Israeli Army and filled with more than five hundred immovable oil barrels brimming with dried concrete. Majdi, who was nineteen, carried out the first of this year's two suicide bus bombings in Jerusalem. More than twenty-five people were killed in the attack. Majdi's mother says that what her son did was wrong, and that her son's victims, except for the soldiers who happened to be on the bus on their way to their base, were innocent. But on the day of Majdi's wake she distributed sweets to the mourners—a sign of celebration.

At around four every day, Amir excuses himself to go and pray. He won't pray at the Ibrahimi Mosque anymore, because, like other Intifada veterans, he doesn't feel comfortable there. It's not that the mosque is dangerous. The zealously guarded Tomb of the Patriarchs is now one of the safest places on the West Bank for both Jews and Arabs; in any case, Amir is protected by Allah, and if he dies at the hands of the Israeli Army or the settlers he will be a martyr. He calls all his dead friends martyrs. He is a deep believer, although he is not Hamas.

Amir and I once had a conversation about the ethics of bus bombings.

"Are they *haram* or *halal*?" I asked, using the Arabic words for "forbidden" and "permitted."

"This is a subject of debate," he said. "Bus bombing is like cigarettes. The question has two legitimate sides. The scholars have not yet decided, because they must study the subject scientifically." Amir is a smoker. According to him, cigarettes are his only vice. "The thing about cigarettes is they are not like alcohol or drugs—they don't make you crazy or remove you from your own judgment. And they give pleasure, which is good. But they can kill you, so it's a hard question to decide. With bus bombing, innocent people die, it is true. Yet, as Zionists, they are the enemy of Islam and they represent the enemy. Islam says the innocent must not be killed, but the Quran also urges Muslims to struggle for the faith. The suicide bombers definitely thought they were struggling for the faith and a lot of people agree."

I ask him if he himself has decided the question. In other words, I say, as far as you are concerned.

"I'm waiting for the wise men to decide," he replies, shrugging and turning his head away. ♦

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REFLECTIONS

IN THE FACE

A metaphysics of fisticuffs.

BY RICHARD FORD

I’VE hit a lot of people in the face in my life. Too many, I’m certain. Where I grew up, in Mississippi and Arkansas, in the fifties, to be willing to hit another person in the face with your fist meant something. It meant you were—well, brave. It meant you were experienced, too. It also meant you were brash, winningly impulsive, considerate of but not intimidated by consequence, admittedly but not too admittedly theatrical, and probably dangerous. As a frank, willed act, hitting in the face was a move toward adulthood, the place we were all headed—a step in the right direction.

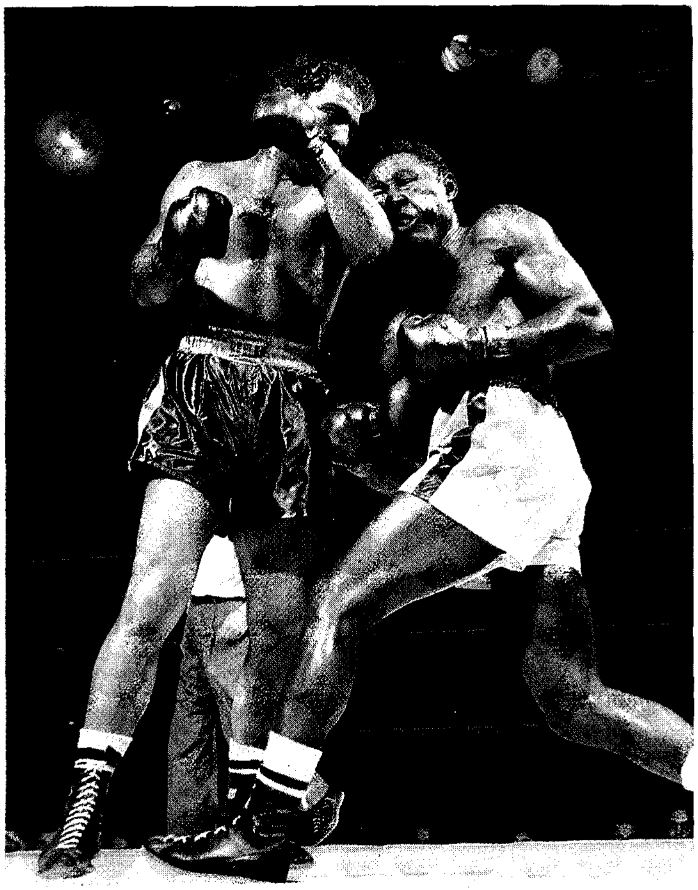
I have likewise been hit in the face by others, also quite a few times. Usually just before or just after the former experience. Being hit in the face *goes with* doing the hitting yourself; and, while much less to be wished for, it was also important. It signalled some of those same approved character values (along with rugged resilience), and one had to be willing to endure it.

I can’t with accuracy say where this hitting impulse came from, although it wasn’t, I’m sure, mere peer pressure. My grandfather was a boxer, and to be “quick with your fists” was always a good trait in his view. He referred to hitting someone as “biffing.” “I biffed him,” he would say, then nod and sometimes even smile, which meant it was good, or at least admirably mischievous. Once, in Memphis, in 1956, at a college football game in Crump Stadium, he “biffed” a man right in front of me—some drunk he got tired of and who, as we were heading up the steep concrete steps toward an exit, had kicked his heel not once but twice. The biff he delivered that day was a short, heavy boxer’s punch from the shoulder. Technically a hook. There was only one blow, but the other guy, a man in a felt hat (it was autumn), took it on the chin and went over backward, and right down the concrete steps into the midst of some other people. He was biffed. We just kept going.

There were other times my grandfather did that, too: once, right in the lobby of the hotel he ran—putting a man down on the carpet with two rather clubbing blows that seemed to me to originate in his legs. I don’t remember what the man had done. Another time was at a hunting camp. A man we were riding with in a pickup truck somehow allowed a deer rifle to discharge *inside* the cab with us and blow a hole through the door—a very, very loud noise. The man was our host and was, naturally enough, drunk. But it scared us all nearly to death, and my grandfather, whose boxing name was Kid Richard, managed to biff this man by reaching over me and connecting right across the truck seat. It was ten o’clock at night. We were parked in a soybean field, hoping to see some deer. I never thought about it much afterward except to think that what he—my grandfather—did was unarguably the best response.

Later, when I was sixteen, and my father had suddenly died, my grandfather escorted me to the Y.M.C.A.—this was in Little Rock—and there, along with the boys training for the Golden Gloves, he worked out the solid mechanics of hitting for me: the need for bodily compactness, the proper tight fist, the confident step forward, the focus of the eyes, the virtue of the three-punch combination. And he taught me to “cut” a punch—the snapping, inward quarter-rotation of the fist, enacted at the precise moment of impact, and believed by him to magnify an otherwise hard jolt into a form of detonation. Following this, I tried out all I’d learned on the Golden Gloves boys, although with not very positive effects to myself. They were, after all, stringy, small-eyed, stingy-mouthed boys from rural Arkansas, with more to lose than I had—which is to say, they were tougher than I was. Still, in years to come, I tried to practice all I’d learned, always made the inward cut, took the step forward, always looked where I was hitting. These, I considered, were the crucial aspects of the science. Insider’s knowledge. A part of who I was.

I OF course remember the first occasion when I was hit in my own face—hit, that is, by someone who meant to hurt me, break my cheek or my nose (which happened), knock my teeth out, ruin my vision, cut me, deliver me to unconsciousness: kill me, at least figuratively. Ronnie Post was my opponent's name. It was 1959. We were fifteen and had experienced a disagreement over some trivial school business. (We later seemed to like each other.) But he and his friend, a smirky boy named Johnny Petit, found me after class one day and set on me with a torrent of blows. Others were present, too, and I did some wild, inexpert swinging myself—nothing like what I would later learn. None of it lasted very long or did terrible damage. There was no spectacle. No one "boxed." But I got hit a lot, and I remember the feeling of the very first punch, which I saw coming yet could not avoid. The sensation was like a sound more than a shock you'd feel—two big cymbals being clanged right behind my head, followed almost immediately by cold travelling from my neck down into my toes. It didn't particularly hurt or knock me down. (It's not so easy to knock a person down.) And it didn't scare me. I may even have bragged about it later. But when I think about it now, after thirty-seven years, I can hear that cymbals' sound and I go light-headed and cold again, as if the air all around me had suddenly gotten rarer.



Rocky Marciano and Ezzard Charles, photographed by Charles Hoff on June 17, 1954.

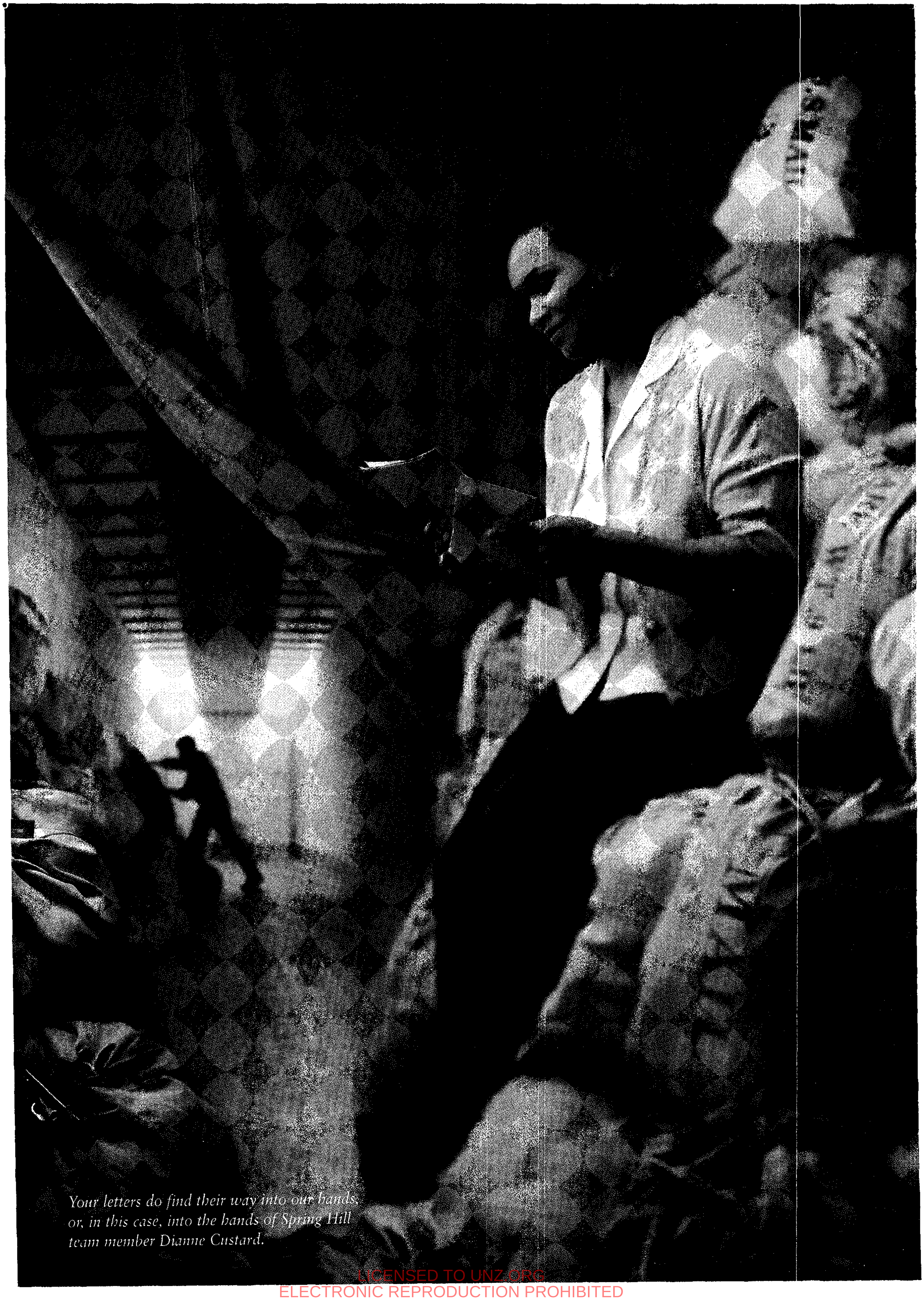
COURTESY OF HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY, N.Y./FROM "THE FIGHTS" (CHRONICLE BOOKS)

Over the years since then, there have been other occasions for this sort of blunt but pointed response to the world's contingent signals—all occasions I think now to be regrettable. I once hit my best friend at the time flush in the cheek in between downs in a football game where we were playing shirts and skins. We were never friends after that. I once hit a fraternity brother a cheap shot in the nose, because he'd humiliated me in public, plus I simply didn't like him. At a dinner after a friend's funeral (of all places) I punched one of the other mourners, who, due to his excessive style of mourning, was making life and grief worse for everybody, and "needed" it, or so I felt. And many, many years ago, on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of May, on a public street in Jackson, Mississippi, I bent over and kissed another boy's bare butt for the express purpose of keeping him from hitting me. (There is very little to learn from all this, I'm afraid, other than where glory does not reside.)

I CAN hardly speak for the larger culture, but it's been true all my life that when I've been faced with what seemed to me to be an absolutely unfair, undeserved, and insoluble dilemma, I have thought about hitting it or its human emissary in the face. I've felt this about authors of unfair book reviews. I've felt it about other story writers whom I considered perfidious and due for some suffering. I've felt it about my wife on a couple of occasions. I once took a reckless swing at my own father, a punch that missed but brought on very bad consequences for me. I even felt it about my neighbor across the street, who, in the heat of an argument over nothing less than a barking dog, hit me in the face very hard, provoking me (or so I judged it) to hit him until he was down on the sidewalk and helpless. I was forty-eight years old when that happened—an adult in every way.

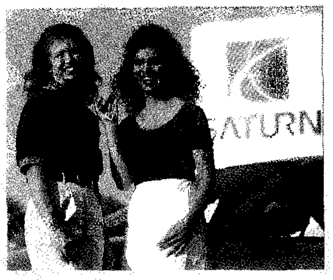
Today, by vow, I don't do that kind of thing anymore, and pray no one does it to me. But hitting in the face is still an act the possibility of which I *retain* as an idea—one of those unerasable personal facts we carry around in deep memory and inventory almost every day, and that represent the seemingly realest, least unequivocal realities we can claim access to. These facts are entries in our bottom line, which for each of us is always composed of plenty we're not happy about. Oddly enough, I don't think about hitting much when I attend an actual boxing match, where plenty of hitting happens. Boxing *seems* to be about so much more than hitting—about not getting hit, about certain attempts at grace, even about compassion or pathos or dignity. Though hitting in the face may be *all* boxing's about—that and money—and its devotees have simply fashioned suave mechanisms of language to defend against its painful redundancy. This is conceivably why A. J. Liebling wrote less about boxing than about boxers, and why he called it a science, not an art: because hitting in the face is finally not particularly interesting, inasmuch as it lacks even the smallest grain of optimism.

Part of my bottom line is that to myself I'm a man—fairly, unfairly, uninterestingly, stupidly—who could be willing to hit you in the face. And there are still moments when I think this or that—some enmity, some affront, some inequity or malfeasance—will conclude in blows. Possibly I am all unwholesome violence inside, and what I need is therapy or to start life over again on a better tack. Or possibly there's just a meanness in the world and, as Auden wrote, "we are not any of us very nice." But that thought—hitting—thrilling and awful at the same time, is still one crude but important calibration for what's serious to me, and a guide, albeit extreme, to how I *could* confront the serious if I had to. In this way, I suppose it is a part of my inner dramaturgy, and relatable, as interior dramas and many perversions are, to a sense of justice. And in the end it seems simply better and more generally informative that I know at least this much about myself—and learn caution from it, forbearance, empathy—rather than know nothing about it at all. ◆

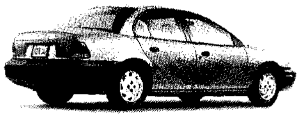


Your letters do find their way into our hands, or, in this case, into the hands of Spring Hill team member Dianne Custard.

To hear some people tell it, buying a Saturn was kind of nice.



Neither snow, nor rain, nor gloom of night can keep a Saturn owner from telling us how much they enjoyed buying their car. That's right, enjoyed. Although words such as "elated" and phrases like "I can't tell you how pleased" are often substituted, we figure they mean enjoyed just the same. What we can't figure, however, is why this is anything to write home about. After all, when we first started selling Saturns we figured we'd just treat people the same way we would want to be treated ourselves. It's an experience rooted in common courtesy more than anything else. Yet apparently, it's an experience that is not all that common. Or so we've been told. And told. And told.



THE 1997 SATURN SL

I ♥ SATURN

Not every letter we get comes via the mail. A lot of it comes via computer. If you haven't visited the Saturn Internet site at http://www.saturncars.com, you might want to give it a try. It's a great way to learn about Saturn and the cars we're building this year—like our new coupe.

Dear Saturn,

One of the nice features of owning a Saturn is our Customer Assistance Center.

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Got a question about your car? Interested in finding your nearest Saturn retailer? Want

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directions to Spring Hill? Operators are standing by. Actually, they're sitting, but what the hey.

you treated me.

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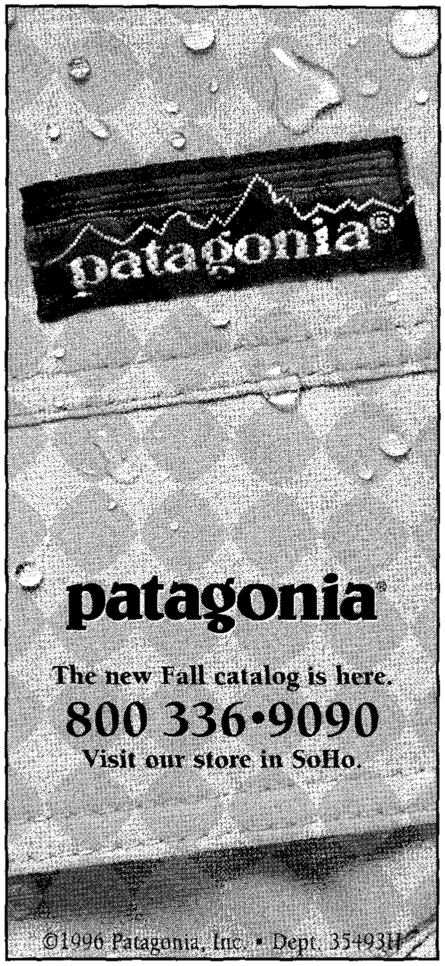
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PERSONAL HISTORY

A DRUGSTORE EDEN

In Pelham Bay, at the end of the Depression, one small plot of land harbored many dreams.

BY CYNTHIA OZICK

IN 1929, my parents sold their drugstore in Yorkville—a neighborhood comprising Manhattan's East Eighties—and bought a pharmacy in Pelham Bay, in the northeast corner of the Bronx. It was a move from dense city to almost country. Pelham Bay was at the very end of a relatively new stretch of elevated train track that extended from the subway of the true city all the way out to a small-town enclave of little houses and a single row of local shops: shoemaker's, greengrocer, drugstore, grocery, bait store. There was even a miniature five-and-ten where you could buy pots, housedresses, and thick lisle stockings for winter. Three stops down the line was the more populous Westchester Square, with its bank and post office, which old-timers still called "the village"—Pelham Bay had once lain outside the city limits, in Westchester County.

This lost little finger of the borough was named for the broad but mild body of water that rippled across Long Island Sound to a blurry opposite shore. All the paths of Pelham Bay Park led down to a narrow beach of rough pebbles, and all the surrounding streets led, sooner or later, to the park, wild and generally deserted. Along many of these streets there were empty lots that resembled meadows, overgrown with Queen Anne's lace and waist-high weeds glistening with what the children termed "snake spit"; poison ivy crowded between the toes of clumps of sky-tall oaks. The snake spit was a sort of bubbly botanical excretion, but there were real snakes in those lots, with luminescent skins, brownish-greenish, crisscrossed with white lines. There were real meadows, too: acres of downhill grasses, in the middle of which you might suddenly come on a set of rusty old swings—wooden slats on chains—or a broken red brick wall left over from some ruined and forgotten Westchester estate.

"Have I ever been so safe, so happy, since? Has consciousness ever felt so steady, so unimperilled, so immortal?"

DEBORAH ROSS

The Park View Pharmacy—the drugstore my parents bought—stood on Colonial Avenue between Continental and Burr: Burr for Aaron Burr, the Vice-President who killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. The neighborhood had a somewhat bloodthirsty Revolutionary flavor. You could still visit Spy Oak, the venerable tree, not far away, on which some captured Redcoats had been hanged; and now and then Revolutionary bullets were churned up a foot or so beneath the front lawn of the old O'Keefe house, directly across the street from the Park View Pharmacy. George Washington had watered his horses, it was believed, in the ancient sheds beyond Ye Olde Homestead, a local tavern that well after Prohibition was still referred to as "the speakeasy." All the same, there were no Daughters of the American Revolution here: Pelham Bay was populated by the children of German, Irish, Swedish, Scottish, and Italian immigrants, and by a handful of the original immigrants themselves. The greenhorn Italians, from Naples and Sicily, kept goats and pigs in their back yards, and pigeons on their roofs. Pelham Bay's single Communist—you could tell from the election results that there was such a rare bird—was the Scotsman who lived around the corner, though only my parents knew this. They were privy to the neighborhood's opinions, ailments, and family secrets.

In those years, the drugstore seemed one of the world's permanent institutions. Who could have imagined that it would one day vanish into an aisle in the supermarket, or reëmerge as a kind of supermarket itself? What passes for a pharmacy nowadays is all open shelves and ceiling racks of brilliant white neon suggesting perpetual indoor sunshine. The Park View, by contrast, was a dark cavern lined with polished wood cabinets rubbed nearly black and equipped with sliding glass doors and mirrored backs. The counters were heaped with towering ziggurats of lotions, potions, and packets, and under them ran glassed-in showcases of the same sober wood. There was a post office (designated a "substation") that sold penny postcards and stamps and money orders. The prescription area was in the rear, closed off from view: here were scores of labelled drawers of all sizes, and rows of oddly shaped brown bottles. In one of those drawers traditional rock candy was stored, in two flavors, plain and maple; it dangled on long strings. And finally there was the prescription desk itself, a sloping, lecternlike affair on which the current prescription ledger always lay, like some sacred text.

There was also a soda fountain. A pull at a long black handle spurted out carbonated water; a push at a tiny silver spout drew forth curly drifts of whipped cream. The air in this part of the drugstore was steamy with a deep coffee fragrance, and on wintry Friday afternoons the librarians from the Travelling Library, a green truck that arrived once a week, would linger, sipping and gossiping on the high-backed fountain chairs, or else at the little glass-topped tables nearby, with their small three-cornered seats. Everything was fashioned of the same burnished chocolate-colored wood, except the fountain counters, which were heavy marble. Above the prescription area, sovereign over all, rose a symbolic pair of pharmacy globes, one filled with red fluid, the other with blue. My father's diploma, Class of 1917, was mounted on a wall; next to it hung a picture of the graduates. There was my very young father, with his round pale eyes and widow's peak—a fleck in a mass of black gowns.

SOMETIME around 1937, my mother said to my father, "Willie, if we don't do it now we'll never do it."

It was the trough of the Great Depression. In the comics, Pete the Tramp was swiping freshly baked pies set out to cool on windowsills; and in real life tramps (as the homeless were then called) were turning up in the Park View nearly every day. Sometimes they were city drunks—"Bowery bums"—who had fallen asleep downtown on the subway and ended up in Pelham Bay. Sometimes they were exhausted Midwesterners who had been riding the rails and had rolled off into the cattails of the Baychester marsh. But always my father sat them down at the fountain and fed them a sandwich and soup. They smelled bad, and their eyes were red and rheumy; often, they were very polite. They never left without a meal and a nickel for carfare.

No one was worse off than the tramps, or more desolate than the family who lived in an old freight car on the way to Westchester Square; but no one escaped the Depression. Seven days a week, the Park View opened at 9 A.M. and closed at two the next morning. My mother scurried from counter to counter, tended the fountain, unpacked cartons, climbed ladders; her varicose veins oozed through their strappings. My father patiently

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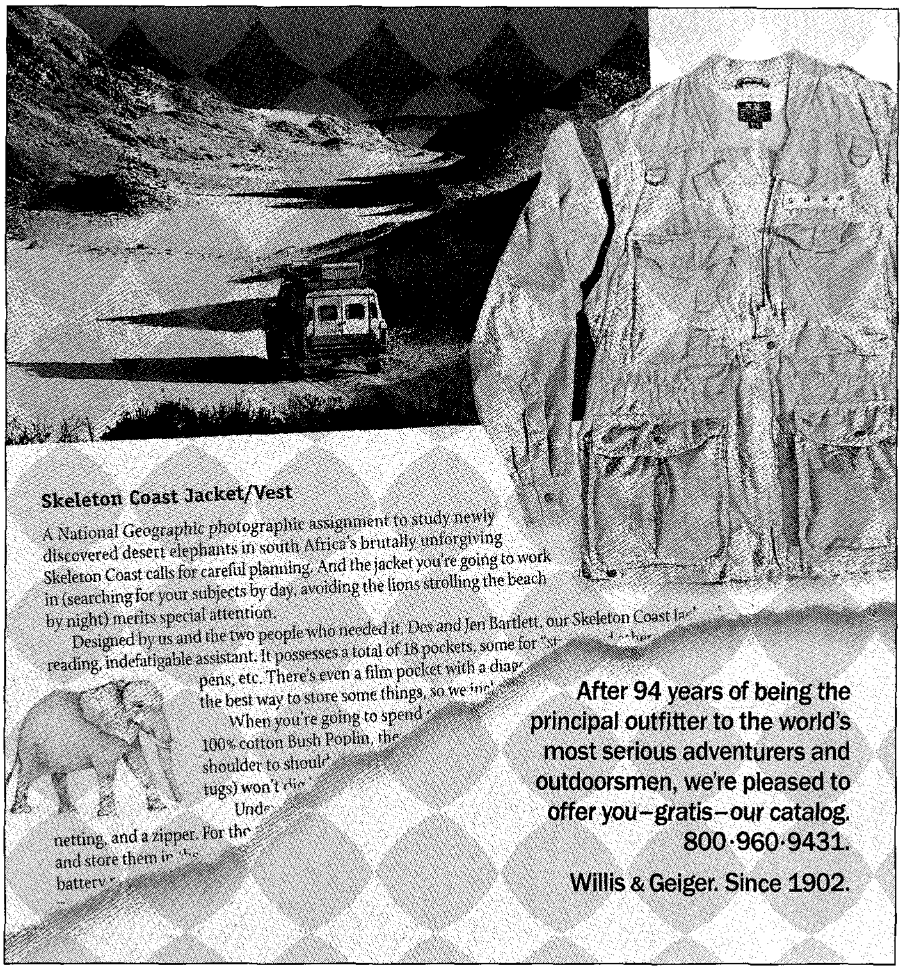

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ground powders and folded the white dust into translucent paper squares with elegantly efficient motions. The drugstore was, besides, a public resource: my father bandaged cuts, took specks out of strangers' eyes, and once removed a fishhook from a man's cheek—though he sent him off to the hospital, on the other side of the Bronx, immediately afterward. My quiet father had cronies and clients, grim women and voluble men who flooded his understanding ears with the stories of their sufferings, of flesh or psyche. My father murmured and comforted, and later my parents would whisper sadly about who had "the big C," or, with an ominous gleam, they would smile over a geezer certain to have a heart attack: the geezer would be newly married to a sweet young thing. (And usually they were right about the heart attack.)

Yet, no matter how hard they toiled, they were always in peril. There were notes to pay off: they had bought the Park View from a pharmacist named Robbins, and every month, relentlessly, a note came due. They never fell behind, and never missed a payment (and in fact were eventually awarded a certificate attesting to this feat); but the effort—the unremitting pressure, the endless anxiety—ground them down. "The note, the note," I would hear, a refrain that shadowed my childhood, though I had no notion of what it meant.

What it meant was that the Depression, which had already crushed so many, was about to crush my mother and father: suddenly their troubles intensified. The Park View was housed in a building owned by a woman my parents habitually referred to, whether out of familiarity or resentment, only as Tessie. The pharmacy's lease was soon to expire, and at this moment, in the cruellest hour of the Depression, Tessie chose to raise the rent. Her tiger's eyes narrowed to slits; no appeal could soften her.

It was because of those adamant tiger's eyes that my mother said, "Willie, if we don't do it now we'll never do it."

My mother was aflame with ambition, emotion, struggle. My father was reticent, and far more resigned to the world as given. Once, when the days of the Travelling Library were over and a real library had been constructed at Westchester Square—you reached it by trolley—I came home elated, carrying a

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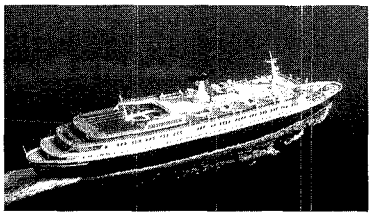

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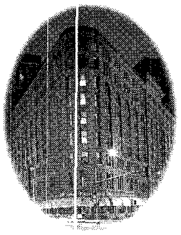

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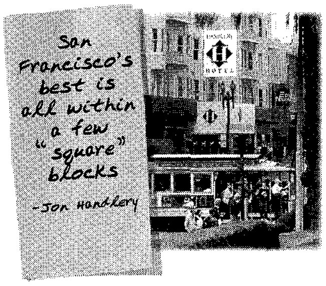

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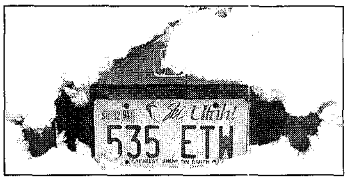

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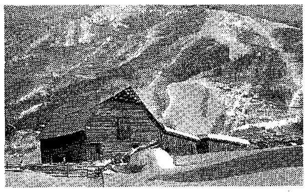

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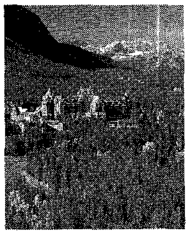

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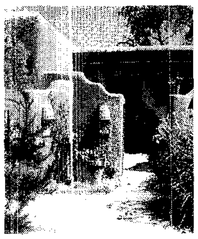

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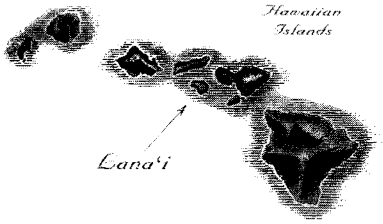

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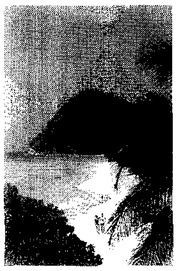

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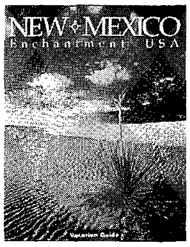

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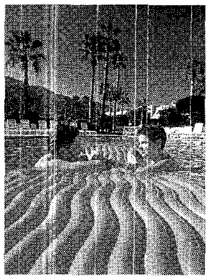

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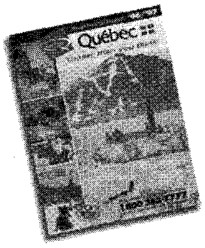

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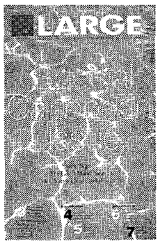

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pair of books I had found side by side. One was called "My Mother Is a Violent Woman"; the other was "My Father Is a Timid Man." These seemed a comic revelation of my parents' temperaments. My mother was all heat and enthusiasm. My father was all logic and reserve. My mother, unrestrained, could have run an empire of drugstores. My father was satisfied with one.

Together they decided to do something revolutionary, something virtually impossible in those raw and merciless times. One street over—past McCardle's sunbaked gas station, where there was always a Model A Ford with its hood open for repair, and past the gloomy bait store, ruled over by Mr. Isaacs, a dour and reclusive veteran of the Spanish-American War, who sat reading military histories all day under a mastless sailboat suspended from the ceiling—lay an empty lot in the shape of an elongated lozenge. My parents' daring plan—for young people without means it was beyond daring—was to buy that lot and build on it, from scratch, a brand-new Park View Pharmacy.

They might as well have been dreaming of taking off in Buck Rogers' twenty-fifth-century rocket ship. The cost of the lot was a stratospheric thirteen thousand five hundred dollars, unchanged from the boom of 1928, just before the national wretchedness descended; and that figure was only for the land. Then would come the digging of a foundation and the construction of a building. What was needed was a miracle.

One sad winter afternoon, my mother was standing on a ladder, concentrating on setting out some newly arrived drug items on a high shelf. (Although a typical drugstore stocked several thousand articles, the Park View's unit-by-unit inventory was never ample. At the end of every week, I would hear my father's melodious, impecunious chant on the telephone, as he ordered goods from the jobber: "A sixth of a dozen, a twelfth of a dozen . . .") A stranger wearing a brown fedora and a long overcoat entered, looked around, and appeared not at all interested in making a purchase; instead, he went wandering from case to case, picking things up and putting them down again, trying to be inconspicuous, asking an occasional question or two, all the while scrupulously observing my diligent parents. The stranger turned out to be a mortgage officer from the American Bible Society, and what he saw, he explained afterward, was a conscientious application of the work ethic; so it was the American Bible Society that supplied the financial foundation of my parents' Eden, the new Park View. They had entertained an angel unawares.

The actual foundation, the one to be dug out of the ground, ran into instant Biblical trouble: flood. An unemployed civil engineer named Levinson presided over the excavation; he was unemployed partly because the Depression had dried up much of the job market but mostly because engineering firms in those years were notorious for their unwillingness to hire Jews. Poor Levinson! The vast hole in the earth that was to become the Park View's cellar filled up overnight with water; the bay was near, and the water table was higher than the hapless Levinson had expected. The work halted. Along came Finnegan and rescued Levinson: Finnegan the plumber, who for a painful fee of fifty dollars (somehow squeezed out of Levinson's mainly empty pockets) pumped out the sea.

After the Park View's exultant move, in 1939, the shell of Tessie's old place on Colonial Avenue remained vacant for years. No one took it over; the plate-glass windows grew murkier and murkier. Dead moths were heaped in decaying mounds on the inner sills. Tessie had lost more than the heartless increase she had demanded, and more than the monthly rent the renewed lease would have brought: there was something ignominious and luckless—tramplike—about that fly-specked empty space, now dimmer than ever. But, within its freshly risen walls, the Park View redux gleamed. Overhead, fluorescent tubes—an indoor innovation—shed a steady white glow, and a big square skylight poured down shifting shafts of brilliance. Familiar objects appeared clarified in the new light: the chocolate-colored fixtures, arranged in unaccustomed configurations, were all at once thrillingly revivified. Nothing from the original Park View had been left behind—everything was just the same, yet zanily out of order: the two crystal urns with their magical red and blue fluids suggestive of alchemy; the entire stock of syrups, pills, tablets, powders, pastes, capsules; tubes and bottles by the hundred; the fountain, with its marble top; the prescription desk and its sacrosanct ledger; the stacks of invaluable cigar boxes stuffed with masses of expired prescriptions; the locked and well-guarded narcotics cabinet; the post office and the safe in which the post-office receipts were kept. Even the great, weighty, monosyllabically blunt hanging sign—"Drugs"—had been brought over and rehung, and it, too, looked different now. In the summer heat it dropped its black rectangular shadow over Mr. Isaacs' already shadowy headquarters, where vials of live worms were crowded side by side with vials of nails and screws.

At around this time, my mother's youngest brother, my uncle Rubin, had come to stay with us—no one knew for how long—in our little house on St. Paul Avenue, a short walk from the Park View. Five of us lived in that house: my parents, my grandmother, my brother, and I. Rubin, who was called Ruby, was now the sixth. He was a bachelor and something of a family conundrum. He was both bitter and cheerful; effervescence would give way to lassitude. He taught me how to draw babies and bunnies, and could draw anything himself; he wrote ingenious comic jingles, which he illustrated as adroitly, it struck me, as Edward Lear; he cooked up mouthwatering corn fritters and designed fruit salads in the shape of ravishing unearthly blossoms. When now and then it fell to him to put me to bed, he always sang the same heartbreaking lullaby—"Sometimes I fee-eel like a motherless child, a long, long way-ay from ho-ome"—in a deep and sweet quaver. In those days, he was mostly jobless; on occasion, he would crank up his tin lizzie and drive out to upper Westchester to prune trees. Once, he was stopped at a police roadblock, under suspicion of being the Lindbergh-baby kidnapper—the back seat of his messy old Ford was strewn with ropes, hooks, and my discarded baby bottles.

Ruby had been disappointed in love, and was somehow a disappointment to everyone around him. When he was melancholy or resentful, the melancholy was irritable and the resentment acrid. As a very young man, he had been single-minded in a way that none of his immigrant relations, or the snobbish mother of the girlfriend who had been coerced into jilting him, could understand or sympathize with. In czarist Russia's restricted Pale of Settlement, a pharmacist was the highest vocation a Jew could attain to. In a family of pharmacists, Ruby wanted to be a farmer. Against opposition, he had gone off to a farm school in New Jersey—one of several Jewish agricultural projects sponsored by the German philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch. Ruby was always dreaming up one sort of horticultural improvement or another, and sometimes took me with him to visit a certain Dr. McClean, at the New York Botanical Garden, whom he was trying to interest in one of his inventions. He was kindly received, but nothing came of it. Despite his energy and originality, all Ruby's hopes and strivings collapsed in futility.

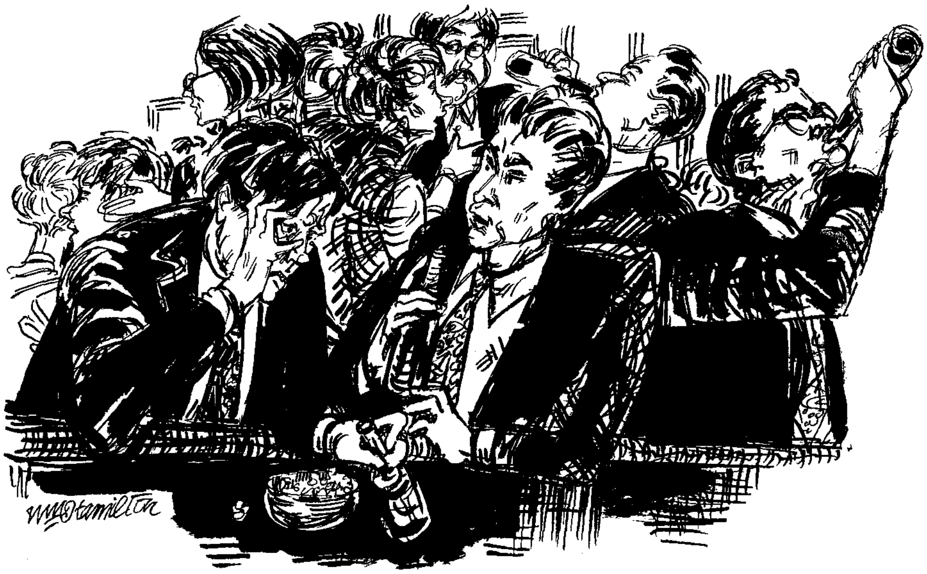
His presence now was fortuitous: he could assist in the move from Tessie's place to the new location. But his ingenuity, it would soon develop, was benison from the goddess Flora. The Park View occupied all the width but not the entire depth of the lot on which it was built. It had, of course, a welcoming front door, through which customers passed; but there was also a back door, past a little aisle adjoining the prescription room in the rear of the store, and well out of sight. When you walked out this back door, you were confronted by an untamed patch of weeds and stones, some of them as thick as boulders. At the very end of it lay a large flat rock, in the center of which someone had scratched a mysterious X. The X, it turned out, was a surveyor's sign; it had been there long before my parents bought the lot. It meant that the property extended to that point and no farther.

I was no stranger either to the lot or to its big rock. It was where the neighborhood children played—a sparse group in that sparsely populated place. Sometimes the rock was a pirate ship; sometimes it was a pretty room in a pretty house; in January it held a snow fort. But early one summer evening, when the red ball of the sun was very low, a little girl named Theresa, whose hair was as red as the sun's red ball, discovered the surveyor's X and warned me against stamping on it. If you stamp on a cross, she said, the Devil's helpers climb right out from inside the earth and grab you and take you away to be tortured. "I don't believe that," I said, and stamped on the X as hard as I could. Instantly, Theresa sent out a terrified shriek; chased by the red-gold zigzag of her hair, she fled. I stood there abandoned—suppose it was true? In the silence all around, the wavering green weeds seemed taller than ever before.

Looking out from the back door at those same high weeds, my mother, like Theresa, saw hallucinatory shapes rising out of the ground. But it was not the Devil's minions that she imagined streaming upward; it was their very opposite—a vision of celestial growths and fragrances, brilliant botanical hues, golden pears and yellow sunflower faces, fruitful vines and dreaming gourds. She imagined an enchanted garden. She imagined a secret Eden.

What she did not imagine was that Ruby, himself so unpeaceable, would turn out to be the viceroy of her peaceable kingdom. Ruby was angry at my mother; he was angry at everyone but me—I was too young to be held responsible for his lost loves and aspirations. But he could not be separated from his love of fecund dirt. Dirt—the brown dirt of the earth—inspired him; the feel and smell of dirt uplifted him; he took an artist's pleasure in the soil and all its generative properties. And though he claimed to scorn my mother, he became the subaltern of her passion. Like some wizard commander of the stones—they were scattered everywhere in a wild jumble—he swept them into orderliness. A pack of stones was marshalled into a low wall. Five stones were transformed into a perfect set of stairs. Seven stones surrounded what was to become a flower bed. Stones were borders, stones were pathways, stones—placed just so—were natural sculptures. And, finally, Ruby commanded the stones to settle in a circle in the very center of the lot. Inside the circle there was to be a green serenity of grass, invaded only by the blunders of violets and wandering buttercups. Outside the circle, the earth would be a fructifying engine. It was a dreamer's circle, like the moon or the sun, or a fairy ring, or a mystical small Stonehenge, miniaturized by a spell.

The back yard was cleared, but it was not yet a garden. Like a merman combing a mermaid's weedy hair, my uncle Ruby had unravelled primeval tangles and brambles. He had set up two tall metal poles to accommodate a rough canvas hammock, with a wire strung from the top of one pole to the other. Over this wire a rain-faded old shop awning had been flung, so that the hammock became a tent or cave or darkened den. A back-yard hammock! I had encountered such things only in storybooks.

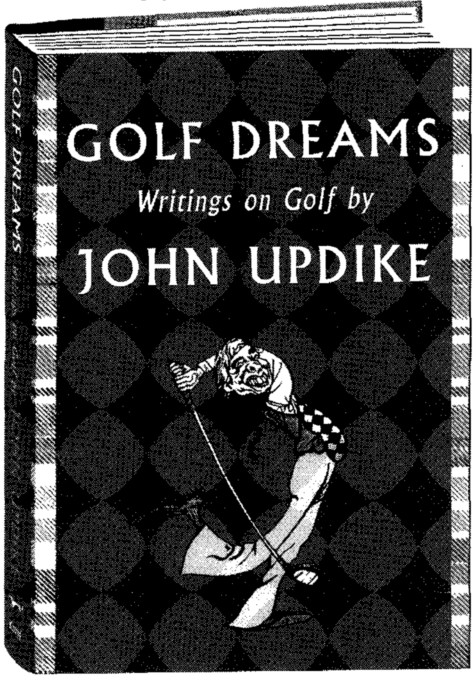


"She sounds like a complete cad."

And then my uncle was gone—drafted before the garden could be dug. German tanks were biting into Europe. Weeping, my grandmother pounded her breast with her fist: the British White Paper of 1939 had declared that ships packed with Jewish refugees would be barred from the beaches of Haifa and Tel Aviv, and returned to a Nazi doom. In P.S. 71, our neighborhood school, the boys were drawing cannons and warplanes; the girls were drawing figure skaters in tutus; both boys and girls were drawing the Trylon and the Perisphere. The Trylon was a three-sided pyramid. The Perisphere was a shining globe. They were already as sublimely legendary as the Taj Mahal. The "official" colors of the 1939 World's Fair were orange and blue: everyone knew this; everyone had ridden in the noiselessly moving armchairs of the Futurama into the Fair's City of Tomorrow, where the elevated highways of the impossibly futuristic nineteen-sixties materialized among inconceivable suburbs. In the magical lanes of Flushing, you could watch yourself grin on a television screen as round and small as the mouth of a teacup. My grandmother, in that frail year of her dying, was taken to see the Jewish Palestine Pavilion.

Ruby sent a photograph of himself in Army uniform, and a muffled recording of his voice, all songs and jolly jingles, from a honky-tonk arcade in an unnamed Caribbean town. It was left to my mother to dig the garden. I have no inkling of when or how. I lived inside the hammock all that time, under the awning, enclosed; I read and read. Sometimes, for a treat, I would be given two nickels for carfare and a pair of quarters, and then I would climb the double staircase to the train and go all the way to Fifty-ninth Street: you could enter Bloomingdale's directly from the subway, without ever glimpsing daylight. I would run up the steps to the book department, on the mezzanine, moon over the Nancy Drew series in an agony of choosing ("Password to Larkspur Lane," "The Whispering Statue," each for fifty cents), and run down to the subway again, with my lucky treasure. An hour and a half later, I would be back in the hammock, under the awning, while the afternoon sun broiled on. But such a trip was rare. Mostly, the

Updike on Golf!



A golfer for almost forty years, Updike has collected 30 of his inimitable pieces on the game–on topics ranging from the peculiar charms of *bad* golf to the management of short putts, and how to relate to caddies.

Eight of the pieces first appeared in The New Yorker. All 30 have the lilt of a love song, and the crispness of a firm chip stiff to the pin.

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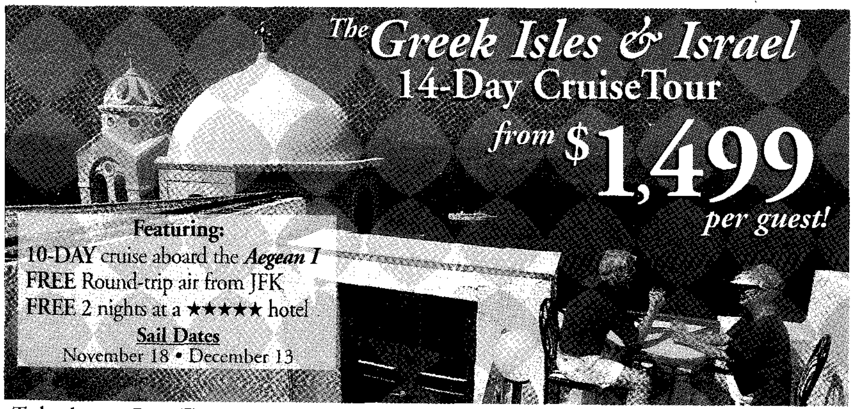
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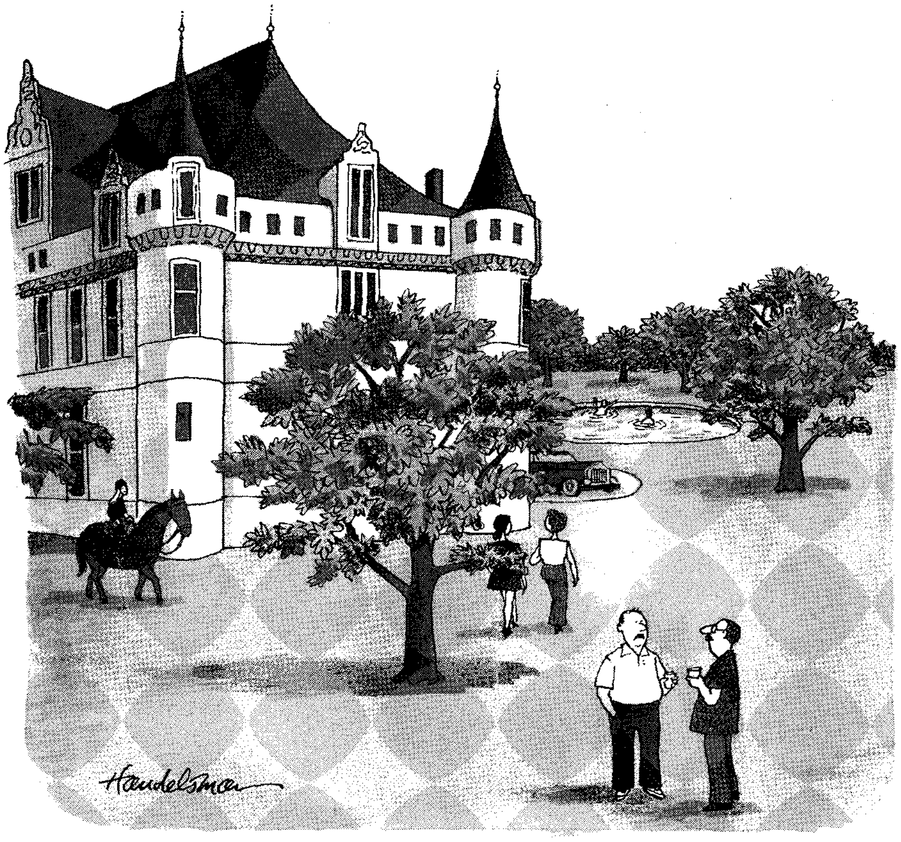


"I could cry when I think of the years I wasted accumulating money, only to learn that my cheerful disposition is genetic."

• •

books came from the Travelling Library; inside my hammock cave the melting glue of new bindings sent out a blissful redolence. And now my mother would emerge from the back door of the Park View, carrying—because it was so hot under the awning—half a cantaloupe, with a hillock of vanilla ice cream in its scooped-out center. (Have I ever been so safe, so happy, since? Has consciousness ever felt so steady, so unimperilled, so immortal?)

Across the ocean, synagogues were being torched, refugees were in flight. On American movie screens Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire whirled in and out of the March of Time's grim newsreels—Chamberlain with his defeatist umbrella, the Sudetenland devoured, Poland invaded. Meanwhile, my mother's garden grew. The wild raw field Ruby had regimented was ripening now into a luxuriant and powerful fertility: all around my uncle's talismanic ring of stones the ground swelled with thick, savory smells. Corn tassels hung down over the shut green-leaf lids of pearly young cobs. Fat tomatoes reddened on sticks. The bumpy scalps of cucumbers poked up. And flowers! First, as tall as the hammock poles, a flock of hunchbacked sunflowers, their heads too weighty for their shoulders—huge, heavy heads of seeds, and a ruff of yellow petals. At their feet, rows of zinnias and marigolds, with tiny violets and the weedy pink buds of clover sidling between.

Now and then a praying mantis—a stiffly marching fake leaf—would rub its skinny forelegs together and stare at you with two stern black dots. Or there would be a sudden blizzard of butterflies—mostly white and mothlike; but sometimes a great black-veined monarch would alight on a stone, in perfect stillness. Year by year, the shade of a trio of pear trees widened and deepened.

Did it rain? It must have rained—it must have thundered—in those successive summers of my mother's garden; but I remember a perpetual sunlight, hot and honeyed, and the airless boil under the awning, and the heart-piercing scalliony odor of library glue (so explicit that I can this minute re-create it in my very tear ducts, as a kind of mourning), and the fear of bees.

No one knew the garden was there. It was utterly hidden. You could not see it, or suspect it, inside the Park View, and, because it was nested in a wilderness of empty lots, it was altogether invisible from any surrounding street. It was a small secluded paradise.

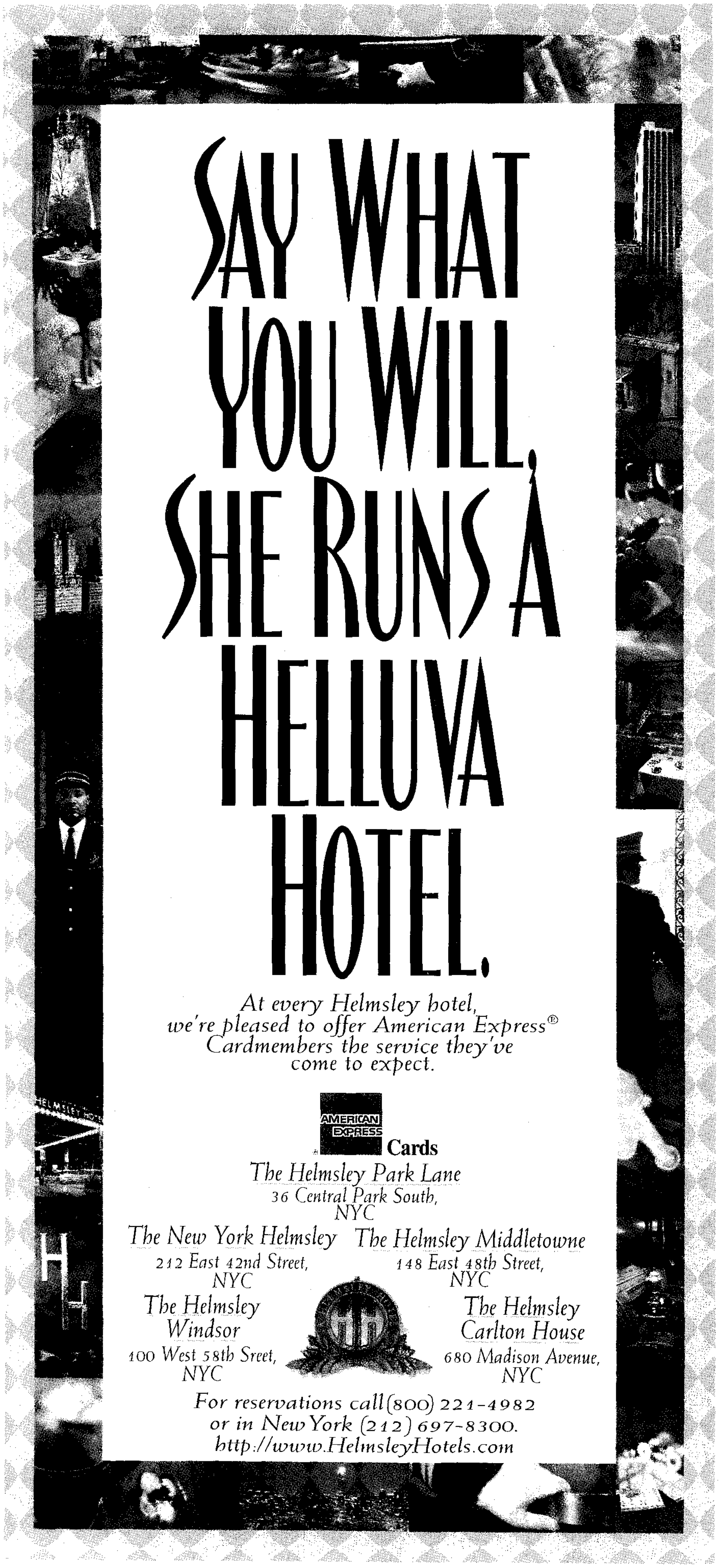
And what vegetable chargings, what ferocities of growth, the turbulent earth pushed out! Buzzings and dapplings. Birds dipping their beaks in an orgy of seed-lust. It was as if the ground itself were crying peace, peace; and the war roared on. In Europe, the German death factories were pumping out smoke and human ash from a poisoned orchard of chimneys. In Pelham Bay, among bees and white-wing flutterings, the sweet brown dirt pumped ears of corn.

THOUGH I was mostly alone there, I was never lonely in the garden. But, on the other side of the door, inside the Park View, an unfamiliar churning had begun—a raucous teeming, the world turning on its hinge. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, there was all at once a job for nearly everyone, and money to spend in any cranny of wartime leisure. The Depression was receding. On weekends, the subway spilled out mobs of city picnickers into the green fields of Pelham Bay Park, bringing a tentative prosperity to the neighborhood—especially on Sundays. I dreaded and hated this new Sunday frenzy, when the Park View seemed less a pharmacy than a carnival stand, and my isolation grew bleak. Open shelves sprouted in the aisles, laden with anomalous racks of sunglasses, ice coolers, tubes of mosquito repellent and suntan lotion, paper cups, colorful towers of hats—sailors' and fishermen's caps, celluloid visors, straw topis and sombreros, headgear of every conceivable shape. Thirsty picnickers stood three deep at the fountain, clamoring for ice-cream cones or sodas. The low, serious drugstore voices that accompanied the Park View's weekday decorum were swept away by revolving, laughing crowds—carnival crowds. And at the close of these frenetic summer Sundays my parents would anxiously count up the cash register in the worn night of their exhaustion, and I would hear their joyful disbelief: unimaginable riches, almost seventy-five dollars in a single day!

Then, when the safe was locked up, and the long cords of the fluorescent lights pulled, they would drift in the dimness into the garden, to breathe the cool fragrance. At this starry hour, the katydids were screaming in chorus, and fireflies bleeped like errant semaphores. In the enigmatic dark, my mother and father, with their heads together in silhouette, looked just then as I pictured them looking on the Albany night boat, on June 19, 1921, their wedding day. There was a serial photo from that long-ago time I often gazed at—a strip taken in an automatic photo booth in fabled, faraway Albany. It showed them leaning close, my young father quizzical, my young mother trying to smile, or else trying not to; the corners of her lips wandered toward one loveliness or the other. They had brought back a honeymoon souvenir: three sandstone monkeys joined at the elbows—see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. And now, in their struggling forties, standing in Ruby's circle of stones, they breathed in the night smells of the garden, onion grass and honeysuckle, and felt their private triumph. Seventy-five dollars in seventeen hours!

NEARLY all the drugstores of the old kind are gone, in Pelham Bay and elsewhere. The Park View Pharmacy lives only in a secret Eden behind my eyes. Gone are Bernardini, Pressman, Weiss, the rival druggists on the way to Westchester Square. They all, like my father, rolled suppositories on glass slabs and ground powders with brass pestles. My mother's garden has returned to its beginning: a wild patch, though enclosed now by brick house after brick house. The houses have high stoops; they are city houses. The meadows are striped with highways. Spy Oak gave up its many ghosts long ago.

But under a matting of decayed pear pits and thriving ragweed back of what used to be the Park View, Ruby's circle of stones stands frozen. The earth, I suppose, has covered them over, as—far off, in an overgrown old cemetery on Staten Island—it covers my dreaming mother, my father, my grandmother, my resourceful and embittered farmer uncle. ♦



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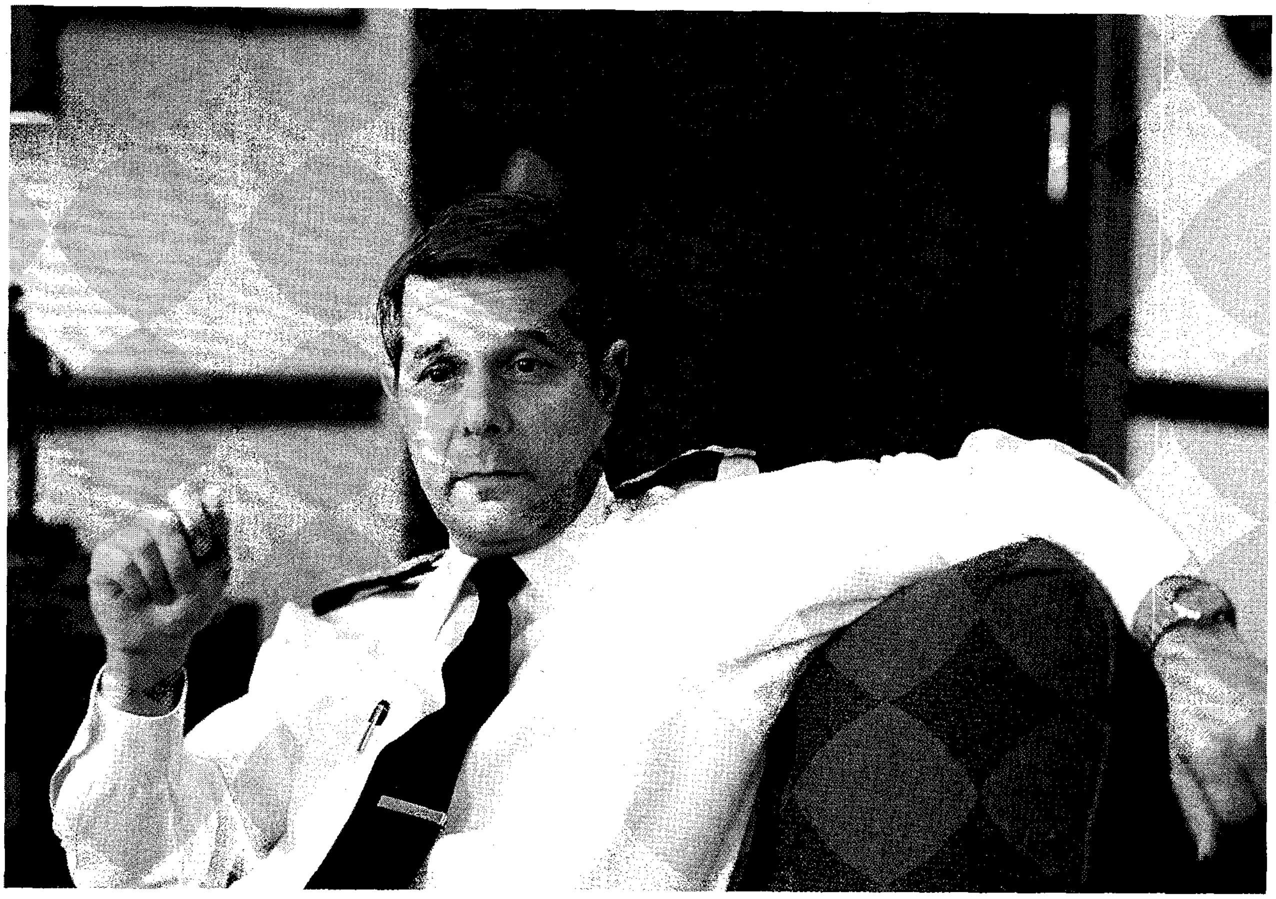


A REPORTER AT LARGE

ADMIRAL BOORDA'S WAR

It wasn't just a scandal over some decorations he wore that made Admiral Mike Boorda take his own life but a battle over the Navy itself—one that started at Tailhook.

BY PETER J. BOYER

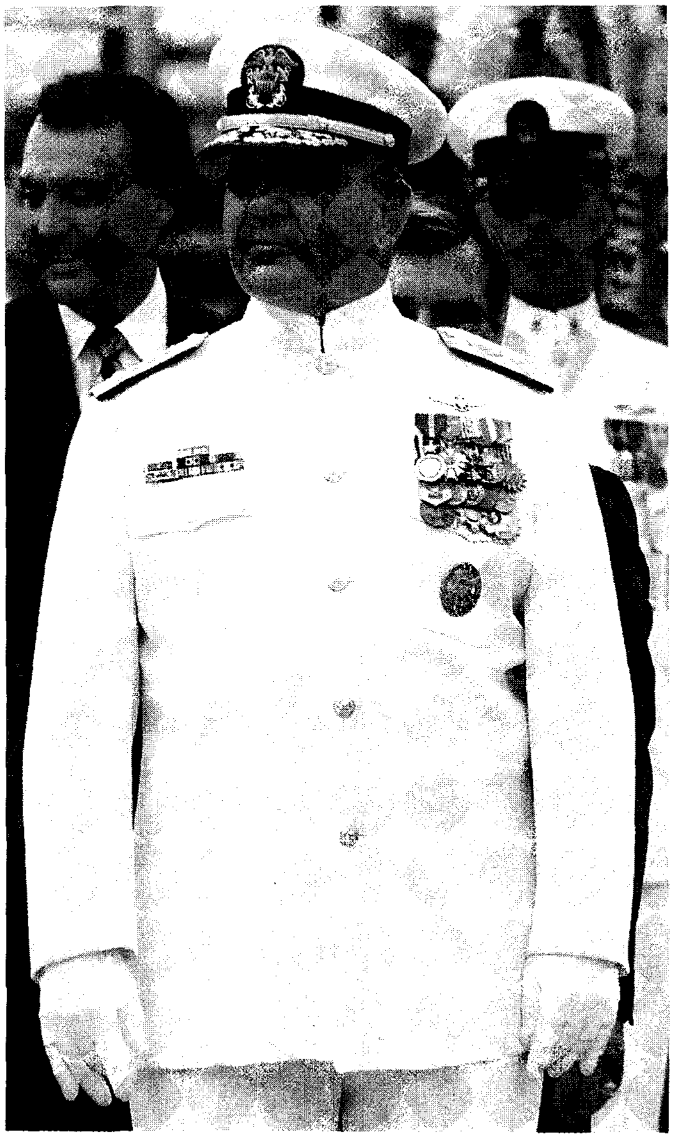
THE suicide last May of Admiral Jeremy Michael Boorda, the Chief of Naval Operations, brought new anguish to the sea service, but also a small, muted hope: Might the death of the Navy's top uniformed officer finally conclude the Tailhook trauma? In the nearly five years since the incident, in which drunken aviators ritually molested as many as several dozen women at an annual convention in Las Vegas, there had come a series of investigations, judicial proceedings, corrective policies, and scuttled careers. To some people, such as Senator John McCain, of Arizona, it had begun to seem that the price the Navy paid for Tailhook was a state of perpetual penance. McCain, the son and grandson of admirals and himself a much decorated naval aviator, had been among the first to condemn the 1991 Tailhook rampage: he wrote to the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and angrily demanded an investigation. Now he says, "Something that should have been, at maximum, a six-month kind of story has turned into a five-year story. At some point, even if the Navy screwed it up, we have to say, 'O.K., this episode is closed.' We've got to have closure on it. And possibly the tragedy of Boorda's death brought some closure to it."

The connection between Boorda's death and Tailhook may not be immediately apparent, but within the Navy the last five years has been like a new epoch—the Tailhook Age. The event is felt as a catastrophe, not only because of the shame of the incident itself but because of the moment it represents: a time of uncertain purpose, unwelcome change, and rampant scandal. Old hands measure it against Pearl Harbor in its devastating effect on the Navy:

The President chose Boorda as Chief of Naval Operations because he was a "people person." Admiral Stanley Arthur, opposite, was the Navy's heroic ideal. Boorda saw his handling of a controversy involving Arthur as the worst mistake of his career.

STEVE BARRETT/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

the laxity and inattention that left the American fleet vulnerable in 1941 cost a single admiral his job; so far, the careers of fourteen admirals and nearly three hundred naval aviators have been ended or damaged by Tailhook. The scandal became the divide between the old Navy, flawed but secure in its verities, and the new, conceived in the heat of the nation's culture wars. "What you've got in the Navy is a culture cracking," Colorado's Representative Pat Schroeder, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, says, without discernible remorse. Tailhook brought women in combat; mandatory career-long sensitivity training; and politicians into the Navy's sacred promotion process. It also, in April, 1994, brought Mike Boorda into the Navy's highest job.



JESSE NEMEROFSKY/PHOTOREPORTERS

IN an ordinary time, Admiral Boorda would not have been an obvious choice for Chief of Naval Operations. He was not a heroic figure: he did not serve in one of the Navy's glamour arenas—aviation and submarines—and he had never been fired upon in combat (a rite whose value, events would show, Boorda knew only too well). He was a Jew, and Jews are rare in the Navy's upper rungs; he was not an Annapolis man (as all his predecessors had been); and he was a former seaman (as none of his predecessors had been), who rose through the ranks. Even his physical aspect—he stood only five feet four—helped convey an image of the quintessential bureaucrat, which, as the former Chief of Naval Personnel, he was. But the old ideal of a military leader bore the Tailhook taint, and was precisely what was being rejected. In that sense, Boorda was perfectly suited to the moment: he was smart, was politically attuned, and had a reputation as a "people person," a "Call me Mike" kind of guy. Another principal candidate for the job of C.N.O., Admiral Charles Larson, was an esteemed warrior—an aviator and a submariner—and an Annapolis man. President Clinton chose the people person.

Boorda's sympathetic communion with the men and women of the Navy was not a political contrivance. He was someone who had seen the Navy from the bottom up as well as from the top down. He knew the coarse-denim sociology of the fo'c'sle, where the Navy was something to run away to, or from. Boorda had done both. He was the middle child of three, born, in 1939, to Herman and Gertrude Boorda, in South Bend, Indiana. Theirs was a life that Boorda used to describe only vaguely, saying that his home was unhappy enough to prompt him to drop out of school when he was sixteen and to lie about his age and join the Navy.

Both of his parents were children of Jewish corner-store merchants—on his father's side, immigrants from Lithuania and the Ukraine—who had settled in South Bend. But Herman and Trudy, as Mike's mother was called, never really settled anywhere. When Mike was still in the crib, the family moved to Chicago, where Herman ran a clothing store. It was a brief stay. Sybil Nahrgang, Mike's older sister by four years, says that one of her earliest memories was of her father suddenly breaking down in tears one night. "I didn't know what was the matter," she says. "I suppose I just thought it was overwork."

The family moved on to Madison, Wisconsin, and Great Falls, Montana, but always returned to South Bend. In 1943, Herman was called into the Navy. When the war ended, in 1945, he returned to South Bend, and the family enjoyed a period of relative stability. The Boordas had a third child, Tim; they moved into a home of their own; and, for the first time, the older children were able to remain in one set of schools. Trudy was a forceful woman, and Herman, though of a softer nature, and given to quoting Shakespeare and the Bible, was prone to dark, disconnected moods. There were arguments, and gradually the semblance of a balanced home began to tilt. Then, as Mike entered adolescence and Sybil was finishing high school, their father's condition was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. "Looking back, I think that all the different times that he changed jobs it was probably the same illness," Sybil says. She remembers her father going to the local hospital for outpatient treatment; she later learned it was electroshock therapy, and says that he would come home dazed, recognizing only his wife and his daughter.

One day in the winter of 1953, when Mike was thirteen and Sybil was a senior in high school, Herman Boorda came undone. He and Trudy were out in the family's green Oldsmobile 88, Trudy behind the wheel and Herman in the front passenger seat. As they crossed the rickety bridge over the St. Joseph

River, Herman suddenly said that he needed to get some cigarettes. He opened the door of the moving car, stepped to the edge of the bridge, and jumped. The suicide attempt did not succeed. Herman was fished out of the water and rushed to the hospital, and there he was kept under police guard. "I'll always remember seeing those clothes in the basement afterward," Sybil says.

Trudy Boorda did not dwell on her husband's breakdown. She explained to the children that their father was ill, and carried on, taking a job in a department store. Three months after the incident at the bridge, Herman Boorda came home from the psychiatric ward of the veterans' hospital in Fort Wayne, in time for his daughter's high-school graduation. But soon Herman and Trudy decided they could not stay in South Bend. "He did not think people would ever forget," Sybil says of the suicide attempt, "and I'm sure a lot of my mother's family never did forget."

After graduation, Sybil took a room at the South Bend Y.W.C.A., and Trudy and Herman moved the boys to Momence, Illinois, a tiny farm town, where the Boordas opened a clothing store. Mike, in high school by then, had friends and played ball for the school, and didn't talk much about his home life. As time went on, Sybil says, "My mother and father got angrier and angrier with each other. I would listen to my mom talk about my dad, and I wasn't supposed to bring his name up. And I imagine Mike went through this, too. And then I would listen to my dad talk about my mom, and I wasn't supposed to bring her up. And I would listen to each talk about how rotten they'd each been." Mike lost interest in school, took to drinking beer and goofing off, and, in 1956, in the middle of his junior year, quit school and joined the Navy.

Seven years later, Herman Boorda and his wife divorced, an event that was followed by another breakdown. Trudy, who got custody of Tim, moved to California and remarried there. Herman sold the store, moved into a trailer, and went to work at the post office. He had little contact with Trudy or Tim and only sporadic contact with Sybil, from whom he periodically declared an estrangement. Sybil stayed in touch with her mother, but she knows very little of Tim, who became a teacher in Berkeley. Somehow, Mike sustained a relationship with them all. After Herman developed cancer, Mike had him admitted to the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home in Washington, and when the old man died, last year, Mike made all the arrangements. He was the only member of his family who attended the funeral.

WHEN Boorda quit school, at sixteen, he didn't necessarily have the Navy in mind. His sister says that their parents were furious at his quitting and later told her that they not only endorsed his decision to join the Navy but drove him to the recruiting station and watched as he signed the enlistment papers that lied about his age. "They thought he'd be home in two weeks," Sybil says.

At first, Boorda hated boot camp, in Illinois, and when his parents visited him he sat in their car and nearly cried. "This is awful," he wrote in a letter to his sister. Even after he made it through boot camp, he still had his doubts about the Navy. At one point, he went AWOL, and nearly got kicked out. Soon, though, he found himself comforted by the Navy's order and discipline. He told a group of recruits in 1989 that "the Navy filled in some of the things that had been missing in my life."

The Navy sent Boorda to a training center in Norman, Oklahoma, and there he fell in love with a seventeen-year-old named Bettie Moran. All the parents objected to the romance, because of the couple's youth and different faiths—she was a Christian—but Mike and Bettie married anyway. Within the year, they became parents. Tragically, their baby, David, was born with only one eye and was otherwise malformed. The doctor who delivered him told the young father that his child was afflicted with a rare disorder called Goltz syndrome and would require repeated surgery but might never see and would always be severely disabled. The doctor advised the Boordas to place the child in a facility that could care for children like David, but Mike and Bettie refused to institutionalize him, and insisted on caring for him themselves. By his fourth birthday, David had undergone seventeen surgeries. For the rest of Boorda's life, David, who is legally blind, occupied the central place in his world away from work: Boorda didn't play golf, he didn't hunt and fish—he helped attend to David. One of Boorda's favorite pastimes was enjoying Redskins broadcasts with him.

David's birth and its consequences had a focussing effect on the young Boorda's view of the Navy, both as an institution that took care of its own, including his son, and as an avenue for his own ambitions. He and Bettie had three more children—two boys and a girl, all healthy—and at work Boorda became a model can-do sailor. He could type like a demon, and that skill got him a job in personnel. He worked ferociously hard and showed initiative, and in 1962 he was chosen for the officer corps. Not many of his fellow Navy officers knew that Boorda was Jewish, which might suggest that he had obscured his heritage as a price for advancement. But Boorda's religion was not central to his identity; he had married a Christian, and when Bettie said that she wanted to rear their children in her faith Mike acceded to her wish. The far greater challenge to Boorda's ambitions was his entry into the officer class—through Officer Candidate School, the lowest portal to an officer's commission. The sea service has always been a classist enterprise, dating back to the British Navy, where the captain of a ship was the complete sovereign and his officers were captains-in-waiting. The world and warfare changed, but neither the British nor the American Navy ever fully shed the élitist image of its white-glove officer class. To this day, up-from-the-ranks American Navy officers like Boorda are called "mustangs," as distinct from creatures of pure breeding. The favored career tracks are those that begin at Annapolis—or, at least, in some university's R.O.T.C. program. Boorda, though, was a high-school dropout.

He compensated by assuming a brutal workload, which included obtaining a college degree in 1971. Sybil says, "He was a workaholic even when he was a young lieutenant, which isn't as healthy as it sounds sometimes. It's a form of escape." Perhaps, but, if so, Boorda was determined to escape upward. That was not made easier by the fact that his branch of the Navy, once he became an officer, was surface warfare—meaning deployment on destroyers, battleships, cruisers, and the like. Of the Navy's war units, the surface guys had the least chance to achieve glory. While submariners got to sneak up on Soviet subs all over the globe and Navy aviators were among the first into every sort of American skirmish, the surface Navy hadn't had a starring role since the Pacific campaign ended in 1945. Boorda did two tours of duty in Vietnam, including one aboard the destroyer U.S.S. Craig, on which he was the enthusiastic weapons officer who directed several coastal barrages. But no one ever fired back. At the end of the cruise, only one of the ship's officers, the captain, received the coveted bronze "V" for his ribbon, signifying the valor of combat service.

Rebecca Hansen: In the pre-Tailhook era, she would have been discharged. But she did not accept the Navy's decision to wash her out.

COURTESY OF REBECCA HANSEN

In 1977, Commander Boorda was posted to the Pentagon as an assistant in the Naval Secretariat dealing with manpower and the reserves. Any officer assigned to duty in Washington must develop at least a tolerance for politics, and successful ones develop actual skill at it. Boorda developed a passion. His first Washington tour lasted four years, and then he was sent out to command a destroyer. But in 1983, by now a captain, he was back on the Potomac; by December of 1984, he had reached a new peak, as executive assistant to Admiral James Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations. In January, 1985, he became a rear admiral.

Boorda used these opportunities to expand his political network. When John Lehman became the Navy Secretary, in 1981, he kept Boorda on as the de-facto Assistant Secretary for several months while waiting for his political appointee to be confirmed. Lehman remembers, "He had an agenda—good ideas that were his ideas on how to fix things. And that's when we put a lot of these programs in—special sea pay, bonuses. We had re-up bonuses, and aviator bonuses, and we put in the family-service centers on the bases, so that the moms could go there to get some help to get the washing machine fixed. Just good, common-sense ideas. That was always his strength."

In 1988, Boorda began his tour as Chief of Naval Personnel. Admiral Stanley Arthur, who came to play a key role in the major drama of Boorda's tenure as C.N.O., was one of those officers who tolerated, rather than embraced, the political aspect of a Washington job, and he marvelled at Boorda's fascination with the town. "It was like a flame to him—he loved it," Arthur says. "I always felt, Just keep it at arm's length. You had an appreciation of it, but don't use it, don't play it, don't get into it. So I always put it out here and watched it very carefully and looked for opportunities when I thought it was the right kind of time to do good things for the Navy. I was very careful. But Mike loved to get right to the flame, just as fast as he could."

TAILHOOK might have been a short-term story, limited in its effect, as John McCain suggests it should have been, except for the accident of its historic timing. The 1991 Tailhook convention occurred on the weekend of September 5th through 8th. Two days later, the Senate Judiciary Committee began hearings on the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas. The hearings mutated into a series of accusations and denials of sexual harassment, acted out by Thomas, Anita Hill, and fourteen white male United States senators. It was the time of Long Dong Silver, and of the cry "Men just don't get it." Thomas won confirmation, but Hill and her supporters won the culture war. It would soon be the Year of the Woman—the perfect moment for critics of the military's handling of women's issues to make political gains.

Less than a week after Thomas was sworn in, news of the Tailhook melee broke in the national press. The early stories were sketchy but revolting: a group of drunken aviators had forced women through a clothes-tearing, flesh-grabbing gantlet at a convention attended by senior Navy staff. The official description of Tailhook as an annual aviation "symposium" now seemed laughable, but that was its original purpose, and it was the one time in the year when the most junior officer could directly question the most senior admiral. Over the years, the symposium had become an excuse for partying, and the ever-heightening level of debauchery had occurred with at least the winking acquiescence of the Navy brass—a vestigial nod to the timeless tradition of sailors bingeing on shore. There was also a degree of acquiescence among some of the women who attended Tailhook; in fact, several female naval officers were active participants in the events. Many women who made a career as Navy aviators, though they were not allowed in combat, had become part of the swaggering subculture—a group whose death-defying daily routine set them apart within the Navy. They talked tough and weren't prissy about sex, and one would occasionally show her spirit by grabbing a male colleague's crotch and shouting, "Package check!"

Roxanne Baxter became a Navy flier twenty years ago, and recognized from the start that the aviators' subculture could not be defeated by the women joining its ranks, only emulated. "I bought into it, too," she says. "What I was supposed to be like, everything." Baxter participated in her share of boys'-club rowdiness. "One of the things I learned when I came into the Navy is that they didn't expect you to cry as a naval officer. The ideal naval officer was a man. You had to be like a man. And that was the message that a lot of women got." But Baxter came to believe that she was betraying herself by mimicking the men, and after experiencing incidents of Tailhook abuse she spoke out about the assaults, and she believes that her career suffered for it. She is now out of the Navy (she is married to a former naval aviator) and is studying to be a family therapist. "I don't think the culture has changed to accommodate the women," she says. "You lose something of yourself. I've experienced that. You give up some of the values that you have."

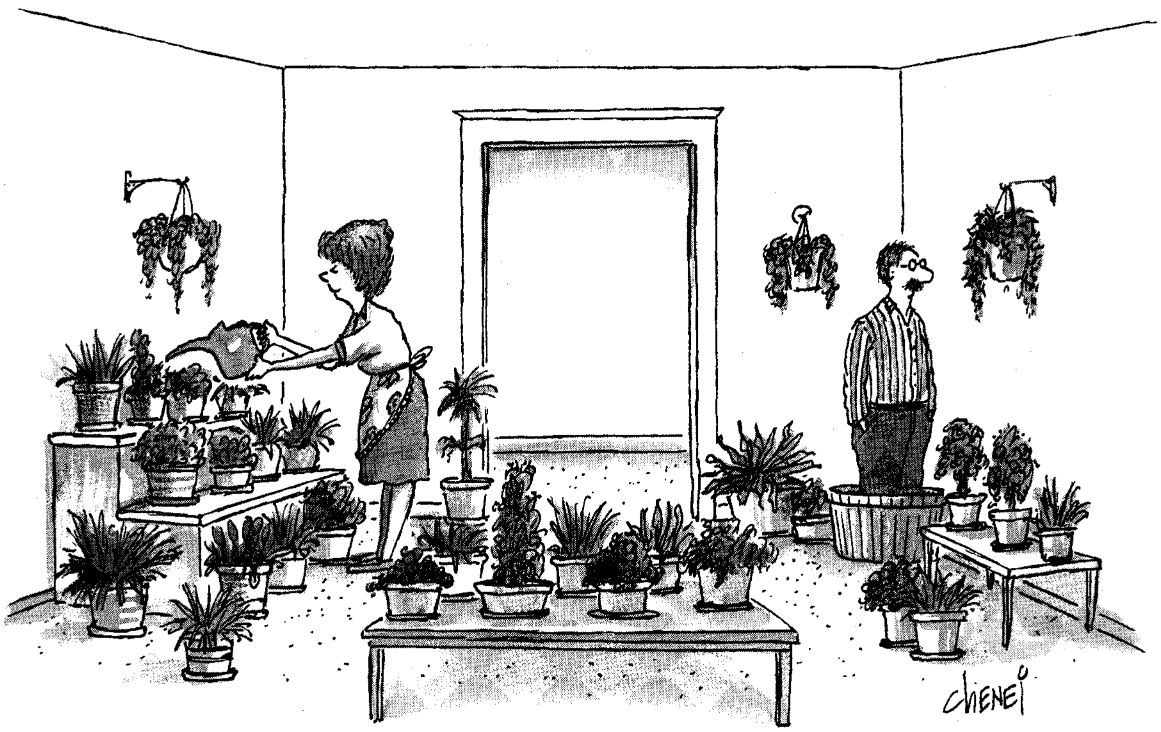
On the Saturday night at Tailhook '91, Lieutenant Paula Coughlin, a helicopter pilot and a rear admiral's aide, found herself trapped in the gantlet. The next morning, when she complained to her boss that she'd been "practically gang-banged," he did not immediately request a formal investigation. But Coughlin was persistent. Within a month, she was giving off-the-record interviews to the San Diego *Union-Tribune*, and by summer she had appeared on Peter Jennings's "World News Tonight." This was followed by an invitation to the Bush White House.

Amid the Tailhook controversy, the issue of women in combat was finally, and quietly, resolved. Pat Schroeder had long used her seat on the House Armed Services Committee to advocate repeal of the law excluding women from combat. She also believed, along with the committee's chairman (and future Clinton Defense Secretary), Les Aspin, that until women were allowed into every military job they couldn't hope for career parity or equal respect. The principal argument against women in combat was also the oldest one—the assumption that Americans could not tolerate the prospect of their daughters, sisters, and mothers returning from war in body bags. There were also some legitimate operational issues, which pertained especially to the Navy: grouping hundreds of post-adolescent men and women together in a crowded metal container and sending them off to sea for six months seemed unlikely to work out in a way that advanced the idea of gender neutrality.

The Gulf War provided a vivid example of the potential problems of a gender-integrated fleet. The Acadia—a tender, which supplied and repaired destroyers but was not technically a combat vessel—was one of the first Navy ships to deploy women. When the ship left its home port of San Diego for the Middle East, three hundred and sixty women constituted about a quarter of the crew; by the time it returned, ten per cent of those women had been evacuated because of pregnancy. The ship, which became known as the Love Boat, supplied Schroeder's opponents with an argument against the women-in-combat idea, and through most of 1991 a victory for Schroeder's side was anything but certain. After the Hill-Thomas experience, though, there was little enthusiasm in Congress for another gender battle; Schroeder had slipped a provision repealing the combat ban into a military-budget-authorization bill, and in November it passed easily.

Tailhook became a self-perpetuating nightmare for the Navy: it stretched out over months and then years. The Navy Inspector General's investigation, released in April of 1992, revealed sordid details, such as a leg-shaving booth (where a male lieutenant would give women a high shave and "make them see God") and the "belly shot" ritual (in which alcohol was lapped up from women's navels); those revelations brought further outrage, and a demand for additional investigations. The Department of Defense began a two-tiered set of inquiries in August, 1992, probing the Tailhook involvement of both junior and senior officers.

The Navy's top leaders had initially responded with a coverup, then hastily capitulated to political pressure. The political and military heads—Secretary of the Navy H. Lawrence Garrett III and Admiral Frank Kelso—had both been at Tail-



hook. In the damage-control scramble after the first Navy investigation, early in October, Kelso and other top Navy leaders echoed the outrage expressed in Congress and the press, and vowed to take steps to eliminate sexism in the forces. Sensitivity training was ordered, and Kelso abruptly became an ardent supporter of the idea of women in combat. He and his Pentagon staff ordered that women combat pilots be aboard the aircraft carriers Eisenhower and Abraham Lincoln on their next deployments. That meant rushing women to the head of the training line, which not only caused resentment among the men who were pushed aside but made clear to the women's commanding officers that their success was an imperative.

Then, in October, 1994, one of these women, Kara Hultgreen, crashed and died while attempting to land her F-14 Tomcat on the Lincoln, off the California coast. The Navy pulled the wreckage from the ocean floor and examined it for possible malfunction. In a subsequent press conference, the Navy issued a report saying that Lieutenant Hultgreen's crash had been caused by engine failure. She was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, in a ceremony befitting a pioneer aviator: it was attended by top Pentagon brass and the Secretary of the Navy. "As C.N.O., I must have attended five hundred funerals at Arlington," the former Chief of Naval Operations Thomas Moorer said recently, "and I never saw a Secretary of the Navy at one of them." Within weeks, an internal report on the Hultgreen crash, which was intended to instruct fliers on safety, revealed that the Navy investigation had found pilot error to be the cause; Hultgreen's left engine did probably quit, but partly because she stalled it out with an improper approach and then failed to respond to a "wave-off" instruction, which might have saved her life. No one considered her anything less than a brave and competent pilot, but many Navy people questioned whether she had been ready for an F-14. In any case, the Navy's disingenuousness in handling her death only fed the growing resentment and cynicism among male aviators.

None of this, in the end, saved Admiral Kelso or Secretary Garrett. Kelso retired early; Garrett resigned. Kelso's departing words, two full years after Tailhook, were "I think this is the end of Tailhook," but he was so strongly identified with the scandal that his retirement became the subject of another bitter Senate fight. Schroeder, who had led a march of congresswomen to the Senate in a much noted demand for justice during the Clarence Thomas hearings, staged another march across the Hill to protest Kelso's retirement at full rank; they wanted Kelso stripped of two of his four stars. They lost that fight, but the debate kept Tailhook in the news.

The Navy leadership became increasingly desperate to placate its critics. When Garrett resigned, his temporary replacement ordered a one-day Navy-wide stand-down—meaning that all operations stopped—to "contemplate the problem of sexual harassment." Two weeks later, the new Navy Secretary, Sean O'Keefe (who had never served in the military), put the top brass on notice, firing two admirals, one of whom, a popular aviator, had allowed his men to issue a newsletter that contained a sexist joke comparing women with beer. "I need to emphasize a very important message," O'Keefe declared at a jammed news conference. "We 'get it.' "

The mechanism most responsible for keeping Tailhook alive has been the so-called "certification" process of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Military critics had long accused the committee of being a functional auxiliary of the armed forces, and in 1992, under pressure from women's-rights activists, the committee, then headed by Sam Nunn, of Georgia, determined to show its independence. The committee put a freeze on the promotions of five thousand officers in connection with Tailhook, and ordered the Navy to compile a confidential list of the men who were implicated in Tailhook wrongdoing, so that their promotions could be given special Senate scrutiny. This "flagging" of personnel files established a new, and most unwelcome, precedent of political involvement in naval promotions at all levels of the officer corps.

The Senate had always exercised its constitutional right of advice and consent on Presidential appointments, but in military promotions (which are also technically Presidential appointments) individual Senate attention has traditionally been limited to only the highest echelon. The Tailhook-flagging process meant that the Senate was also involved in the promotions of commanders and captains, who had already met the test of the Navy Secretary's selection boards. Now Senate staffers were debating a candidate's fitness for promo-

"There, there! Two, maybe three floors down. Someone has an idea!"

tion based partly on Tailhook criteria: Was witnessing a striptease performance a disqualifying malfeasance? Being "implicated" in Tailhook often meant, too, that an officer was merely the subject of a rumor or an unsubstantiated accusation that the investigation had produced. The Department of Defense regularly granted immunity to junior officers in the hope of ensnaring their squadron commanders, who thus became permanently "implicated" even if they were subsequently cleared of wrongdoing. At least one officer was "implicated" and punished despite his insistence that he wasn't even at Tailhook, a claim that was later verified. The Navy imposed a policy requiring that any Navy officer anywhere in the world who came up for promotion had to sign a piece of paper after checking "yes" or "no" to the questions "Were you at Tailhook '91?" and "Was anybody in your command at Tailhook '91?" If the answer to either question was "yes," the candidate's promotion was set aside for special consideration.

Among aviators, the effort to address the offenses at Tailhook began to feel like a political vendetta (Witchhook, they called it), and, as morale declined, an increasing number of aviators decided to quit, and went off to the airlines. Among some of the younger officers, who watched with dismay as the senior leadership seemed willing to embrace any new compromise, officers above the rank of commander were referred to as "the dark side."

At Boorda's confirmation hearing, in April of 1994, Senator Nunn posed a long list of problems awaiting the new Navy chief, and Tailhook topped the list. Strom Thurmond, the committee's ranking Republican, asked Boorda how he had responded to the Tailhook scandal. Boorda confidently replied that there was no women's-issue problem in his command, the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and he claimed credit for having instigated the Tailhook investigations. He said that Paula Coughlin was a roommate of one of his staffers, and that when he heard her story "I brought the Lieutenant to work directly for me, because I wanted to get her out of a bad situation and make sure she could feel comfortable." Boorda relished the exercise of beneficent intervention. After becoming the C.N.O., he made a point of going out to the fleet, meeting the sailors, and fixing their personal problems with a simple command. If a sailor with marital difficulties wanted a shortened tour, Boorda would respond, "Done! Next?" If he bent a rule or interrupted the usual chain of command, so be it; and the sailors loved him. The press and the politicians loved him, too—a fact that may have obscured a considerable unease felt by those in the Old Guard who feared that he was being too enthusiastic in changing the Navy's culture, and not enthusiastic enough in defending it. In the opinion of many Navy defenders, Tailhook was a leadership failure that should have been addressed immediately, cleanly, and firmly.

James Webb, who was Navy Secretary during the Reagan Administration and had been a highly decorated marine in the Vietnam War, believed that in the public debate the Navy's top leaders should have separated Tailhook from the Navy culture—should have cut Tailhook off, and killed it—and then defended the culture. Webb, a member of the Naval Academy's class of 1968, is a best-selling novelist, a journalist, and the most forcefully articulate defender of the Navy culture, so discredited since Tailhook. As such, he became an important voice in what might be described as a kind of post-Tailhook resistance movement. It is more a resistance view, really, shared by a significant (though unmeasurable) group of Navy people, ranging from former admirals to Annapolis plebes, and expressed in opinion articles, public speeches, and private conversation.

A few days after this summer's Olympics ended, Webb sat in his living room talking about Kerri Strug, the American gymnast whose injured-ankle performance had made her a national hero. He referred to a young man, John Paul Bobo, who had been a soldier in Vietnam. "He won the Medal of Honor because he got his leg blown off and he stuck his stump into the ground and fought until he died," Webb said. "You know, *that's* a hero. And this country, the majority of it, can't even relate to that anymore. Doesn't even comprehend what it takes to do it. It's lost not only its respect but its ability to form a respect for it."

Webb lives on the Virginia side of the Potomac, in a high-rise that overlooks the Iwo Jima memorial. He is never very distant from the warrior ideal, or from the complicated transformation that that ideal has undergone in his generation. Webb believes that there is a fundamental schism between our nation's military culture and its civilian society—a society that has mostly never served. In that gap, there grew a misunderstanding of the warrior class, and eventually a devaluation of it, which allowed people unfriendly toward the military ethos to seize upon Tailhook and exploit it politically. In the process, the Tailhook incident came to be allowed to stand for the entire Navy culture.

The defenders of the warrior ideal believe that the Navy has been as sorely dishonored by a weak, acquiescent leadership after Tailhook as it was by the incident itself. In 1988, as Secretary of the Navy, James Webb fought against a proposed fleet reduction by laying his job on the line, and when he lost the political argument he resigned. Such an act of honor and sacrifice, Webb now says, is what the Navy has to have from its leaders before Tailhook can end. "There should have been a point where the senior leadership said, 'This is beyond the authority of the Congress. We will not go along with it. Find somebody else to go along with it,' " he says. "The great leaders in the American military have always done that."

The selection of Boorda as the new Chief of Naval Operations did not necessarily ease the qualms of the Navy's Old Guard. Everyone knew why President Clinton had chosen Boorda. As the former Navy Secretary John Lehman, a steadfast traditionalist, puts it, "Mike's strength as C.N.O. was letting everybody know that there was somebody there looking after their welfare. He was picked because he was committed to removing the last vestiges of discrimination against women, and Tailhook, and so forth." Few doubted that Boorda could help to quiet the critics in Congress and the press. What the institution wanted to know was how stoutly

Boorda would defend the Navy. Would he put an end to Witchhook?

From the viewpoint of the Old Guard, Boorda set out to resolve one politically explosive case—involving, as it happened, Stan Arthur—in exactly the wrong way. Boorda himself later said that his handling of the Arthur case was the worst mistake of his career. Few disagreed.

Admiral Arthur, who, as Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, was the second-highest-ranking officer in the sea service, was the epitome of the Navy's heroic ideal. He was a big man with a jovial nature (Dancing Bear was one of his flight handles), a beloved figure in the Navy, who also enjoyed an outsized measure of respect. Other admirals most often describe him simply as "a great war fighter." As an aviator during the Vietnam War, he flew more than five hundred missions, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross eleven times; during Desert Storm, he commanded America's naval forces in the Persian Gulf. Arthur was one of the Navy's prized officers, and in April of 1994 he was rewarded, when President Clinton selected him to be commander-in-chief of all American forces in the Pacific. Arthur was particularly well suited to the job: a Pacific sailor during most of his career, he had spent the year following the Gulf War attending to American interests on the Pacific Rim as commander of the Seventh Fleet, and building along the way personal relationships with military people and heads of state from Manila to Bangkok to Tokyo.

But Arthur's nomination to the Pacific post was sidetracked at the end of April. A year earlier, a constituent of Minnesota's Senator David Durenberger, a Navy lieutenant named Rebecca Hansen, had complained that she had been unfairly washed out of flight school in retaliation for filing a sexual-harassment complaint. The judgment that Hansen was unqualified for wings had then been reviewed by her commanding officer, a Navy review board, and the Inspectors General of the Navy and the Department of Defense. Hansen persisted in her protest, and earlier in April Arthur himself, the Navy's top aviator, intervened. He reviewed Hansen's flight records, met with her, and then confirmed the decision to drop her from flight training. But Hansen still did not accept the decision, and neither did Durenberger, and Arthur's pending appointment provided him with a convenient means of protracting the fight. On April 28th, five days after Boorda became C.N.O., Durenberger, invoking senatorial prerogative, asked that a "hold" be placed on Arthur's appointment.

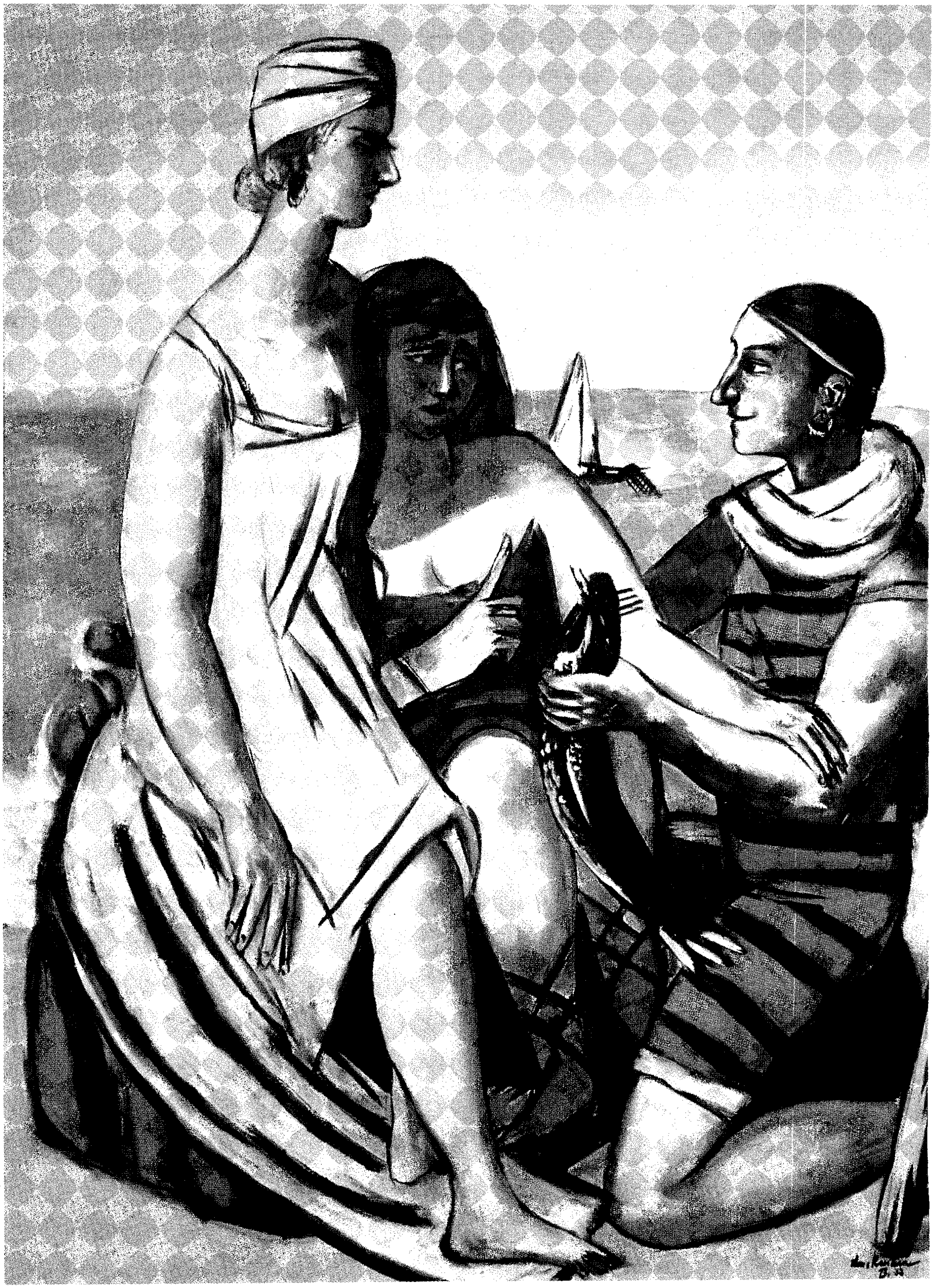
One day in 1981, an English class at Harvard High School, in Harvard, Illinois, was asked by the teacher to describe the meaning of the word "conflict." There was a pause as the students considered the word, and then one student said, "Rebecca Hansen is a conflict."

"Oh," the teacher replied. "That's very good."

That story was told this summer by Rebecca's mother, Kay Hansen, in an attempt to convey that her daughter's life had always been unusually prone to drama. Both women were sitting at a kitchen table at a friend's house in a suburb of St. Paul, where they now live. Rebecca seemed younger than her thirty years. Both she and her mother bubbled with good-natured Midwestern enthusiasm. Kay Hansen was quite young when she married Rebecca's father, whom she divorced when Rebecca was a toddler. Mother and daughter developed an intensely close relationship—that of fierce allies in a world whose forces sometimes seemed aligned against them. Kay said that Rebecca had always been a fighter, and that "when she commits to do something, she really is not going to stop short of doing it, no matter what price has to be paid."

Kay's second husband, who adopted Rebecca, is an executive with *Farm Journal*, which allowed the family to pick a home town in the Chicago region. The Hansens chose Harvard, a small farm community in northeastern Illinois, because they sought the tranquil, nurturing benefits of the small-town ideal. Things did not work out according to plan, however. The Hansens never quite fitted into the community, and, somehow, Rebecca became the focus of their difficulty. "I had some problems in Harvard," Rebecca said. "And I had some

"I think it's time to give the word 'fabulous' back to the straight world."



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ART AVENGES

Max Beckmann left Germany in 1937, just after Hitler's speech at the opening of the Nazi-organized "Degenerate Art" exhibition, which included twenty-eight works by Beckmann. He never returned. "Max Beckmann in Exile," at the Guggenheim SoHo from October 9th to January 5th, focusses on the work he did in Amsterdam and then the United States, from 1937 until his death, in 1950. The show is a stunner—twenty-four paintings, including seven of his nine triptychs and many haunting self-portraits. Shown here is "The Little Fish" (1933), which presaged his final phase.

notoriety in Harvard, too." Rebecca was athletic and attractive, and she got along well with the boys but never found a place among the girls. "I was really hated," she recalled. "It was really traumatic. . . . I joined the basketball team, and they made fun of me. The ringleader made fun of me about how I walked. . . . They made fun of the shorts that I wore: 'Oh, your shorts are so short that your mother has to sew your underwear in them.' " Kay Hansen believed that the other girls were just jealous of her daughter ("There were a lot of big, moosy girls, who walked with their feet two feet apart"), but the antagonisms grew beyond the usual high-school social friction and turned into a conflict that consumed the whole school—indeed, the entire community. Robert Iftner, the principal of Harvard High for twenty years, who is now retired, responded to the mention of Hansen's name with a long, bitter laugh. "Oh, I remember Becky," he said. "She asked for the problems she got, and I don't give a damn what the Hansens say."

Rebecca's difficulties culminated during homecoming week in her sophomore year. As Rebecca told it, the students were gathered at the school one night for the usual decorating and pep rituals when a gang of older girls suddenly seized her. There was a tradition of seniors putting a younger student on the water fountain and getting her pants wet, and the group of girls had chosen Rebecca. In this case, the prank was unsuccessful. A brawl ensued that ended only when Rebecca, as she put it, gave "an uppercut to the stomach" of one of the assailants and managed to get away.

The Hansens did not see the incident as a mere prank; they sued the school district, and also the families of the other girls. That didn't make things easier at school, and the tension got so bad, Rebecca recalled, that she became reluctant to use the bathroom at school. She was allowed to attend the homecoming game, but a police officer was assigned to accompany her. Finally, Rebecca's parents pulled her out of school and paid fees to the school district in the next town, Woodstock, so that Rebecca could finish high school there.

Rebecca graduated in 1984 and went off to Iowa State University, where she received a partial scholarship to join the school's cross-country and track team. She had always had big dreams—she once wanted to be an astronaut—and at Iowa State her plan was to get a degree in aeronautical engineering. However, she switched to journalism before graduation, and briefly worked as a TV sportscaster—a career that ended after a dispute with her boss. After moving back home with her parents, in the St. Paul suburb, she worked for a temp service, then in a clothing store, and then as a flight-attendant trainee at Continental Airlines. One day in 1991, while she was at home reading the want ads, she called out to her mother. "Get this one," Rebecca said, reading an ad that had caught her eye. "The Navy is looking for women pilots."

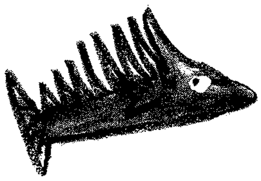
Hansen, who had become a born-again Christian in her late teens, prayed about joining the Navy and sought guidance from a book of devotions. "It has a list of things, like loyalty and faithfulness, submission to authority, leadership, honor," she recalled recently. "It was like the words were coming out at me—that in service I would really learn leadership and honor and integrity and selflessness and submission to authority." She took some tests at a naval recruiting station and was accepted into the Navy's Aviation Officer Candidate School. Kay recalls, "The day she was sworn in, the recruiter said, 'Psychologically, believe me, they've never had anybody like you down there.' "

Basic training for officers, in Pensacola, Florida, was not easy for Hansen. "Some of the guys acted like they were better than the women," she said, and she came to believe that, as one of only seven women (the number eventually shrank to two) in her class of twenty-seven, she was singled out. "I would say it was sexual harassment, really—being told that the shorts I was wearing were too short. You wear shorts and a T-shirt. Men made a big thing about my shorts. My shorts were no different from anybody else's shorts. So they made me wear long pants." She flunked two of the most important courses at Pensacola—navigation and engineering—and had to attend an extra week's classes before passing. But in July, 1991, she received her commission and became an ensign in the Navy.

Hansen was assigned to flight training at the naval air station in Corpus Christi, Texas, and she reported there in

August, 1991, just a few weeks before the Tailhook convention. The course of her long, bitter fight with the Navy paralleled, and reflected, the events at Tailhook and their aftermath. Not long after she arrived for flight training, Hansen recalled, she was subjected to verbal abuse amounting to sexual harassment from one of her flight instructors, a lieutenant named Larry Meyer. In June, 1992, after being sent into the next phase of helicopter training, she filed a formal harassment complaint against Meyer. She cited his behavior during one flight as the most egregious example of his abuse. When, in the preflight check, she had noted that a friction-control knob was stuck, Meyer said, "Isn't that just like a woman to complain about the friction?" Later, during the flight, Meyer suggested that Hansen try contact lenses, on the ground that she would "look really good with blue eyes." He also advised her to dye her hair auburn, and, Hansen complained, "he told me that I should wear either a black or pink bikini bathing suit, but that I should avoid wearing an orange bikini because that would not look very attractive on me." After the flight, Meyer summoned Hansen by saying, "Come on, wench." A few days later, Hansen said, Meyer approached her from behind and grabbed her hair and joked to a group of nearby students, "This is the way I like to control my women."

It didn't help Meyer's case that he was his unit's human-relations officer, charged with guarding against sexual harassment. He protested that he had meant no offense by his remarks—that they had been intended only as friendly banter, and that he would have stopped if Hansen had ever indicated offense. The Navy removed him from his human-relations duty and punished him for making inappropriate remarks—actions that became part of his record. He thought that his career had been unfairly damaged by Hansen, who he believed wanted to rationalize her poor flight performances, and he left the Navy the following year. Hansen believed that the Navy had whitewashed the matter by failing to punish Meyer for harassment and allowing him to leave the service on his own timetable.



By far the most significant development in the case, however, had occurred ten days after Meyer received his punishment. Grousing about the case in the Officers' Club, Meyer had complained that Hansen was "a shitty stick" (a bad pilot) and that he had "buddies just waiting to fly with her." These remarks were reported, and became the basis for Hansen's argument that everything that happened to her afterward was retribution for filing a harassment complaint.

Hansen's progress in helicopter-flight training was problematic. In preflight briefings, one of her instructors noted, "she consistently tensed up, both physically and mentally, when directly questioned on discussion items. Her whole body would tense and she would have difficulty answering or would blurt out related information, but not what was asked." The instructor said that he considered Hansen's case a personal challenge, and determined to improve her training work and get her through that phase, but, when he talked to her about it, "I sensed a great amount of pent-up hostility, though outwardly she was subdued," he wrote. "She had misinterpreted everything I had ever said and now turned everything around into an argument suiting her purposes. . . . Though she would not acknowledge her weak performance, she blamed me, weather, Christmas leave . . . for anything that I as a flight instructor perceived as a problem."

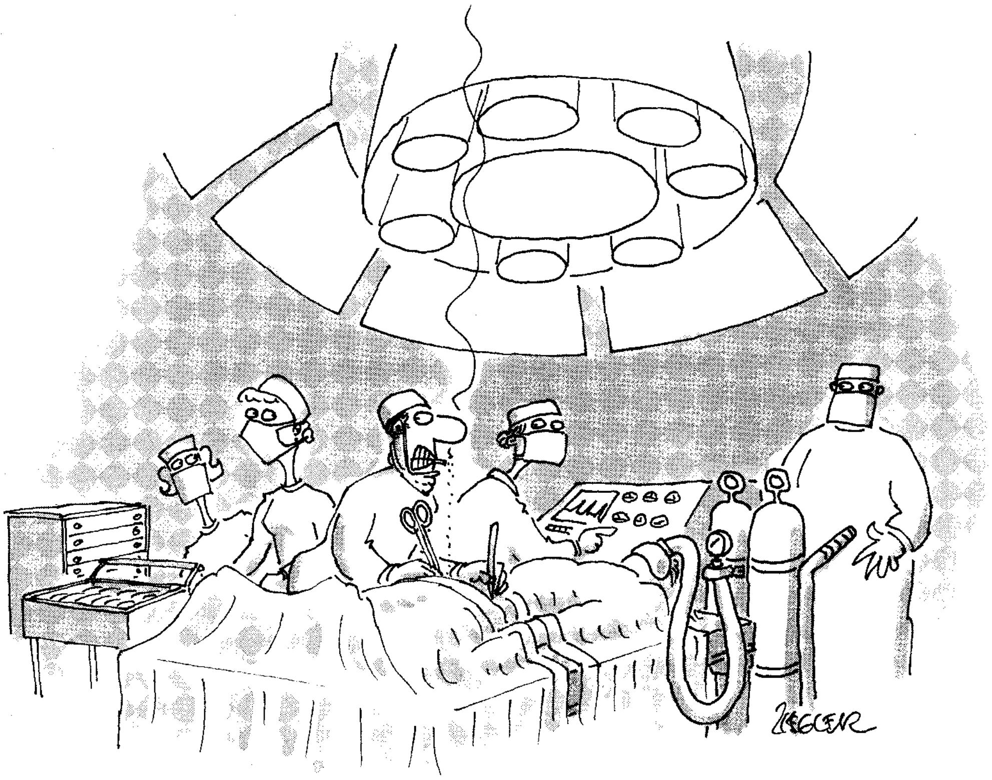
That was the consistent view of Hansen's instructors, and in March, 1993, she was "attrited"—washed out—from aviation training. She appealed the decision, and a review concluded, "Hansen presents a neat, well groomed and professional military appearance. She has no academic problems, is motivated to continue flight training, and is well prepared for her briefs. However, she seems paranoid. She perceives everyone is out to get her, refusing to accept responsibility for her poor performance, which has been well documented from [Officer Candidate School] to present. . . . She evidently does not take constructive criticism well. . . . The squadron does not feel she can successfully complete the program or be an asset to the fleet. They have recommended attrition. I concur."

In the pre-Tailhook era, Hansen would have been discharged, and both she and the Navy would have moved on. But Hansen did not accept the Navy's decision to wash her out. She argued that she was being retaliated against, thereby launching a Navy investigation, and when its results confirmed her washout she dismissed them as further evidence of retaliation. Meanwhile, Hansen's mother, who had been keeping track of her problematic Navy career, wrote to the Minnesota congressional delegation, and found a key ally on the staff of Senator Durenberger (whose career, coincidentally, was about to come to a close as a result of a series of financial scandals). One of Durenberger's caseworkers, Anne Crowther, had taken an interest in the post-Tailhook political fight over the Navy, and she now focussed on the Hansen case with zeal. She still says of it, "It is a mission to me."

Crowther and Kay Hansen worked together preparing Rebecca's case, and Durenberger's staff wrote the Navy several letters over Durenberger's name, with the aim of getting the service to show that Hansen's washout was the product of retaliation. A senator's involvement at just that time, in the post-Tailhook heat of 1993 and 1994, was a mighty sword for Hansen, and her relatively low-level case became a consuming priority for Navy officials.

STAN ARTHUR found himself—and his own career—ensnared in the Hansen dispute when Navy Secretary John Dalton, who had been appointed in August of 1993, asked for his help. "I stepped into that one as a favor to the Secretary," Arthur says. "She was just going to file charges and countercharges and countercharges . . . endless." Arthur seemed just the right man for Dalton to turn to. He was old Navy, but he had also had a direct hand in bringing women into naval aviation and, eventually, into combat planes. A peerless flier himself, Arthur saw aviation talent as one of God's mysterious gifts—"monkey skills," he called it—that are distributed indiscriminately on a gender-neutral basis. He also had a particular expertise in evaluating a flight student's training progress, having served as a senior member of the review board charged with taking away pilots' wings. Arthur figured that he could bring authority to the review of the Hansen case, and that his decision would stand. "I may have been overly confident in that regard," he says now, deadpanning the understatement.

After Arthur reviewed Hansen's training records, he was surprised that her complaint had got as far as it had. "What I saw was the most dangerous of all individuals that we would try to get through flight training," he says. "Most of her flights were extended, because she started out and had terrible tendencies at the start, they would work on them, and by the end of the flight they would get to a satisfactory level and she would get the marginal grades associated with that. Come right back, the next flight, and the same tendencies were there at the start. In other words, there was no learning curve, where each day you develop a bigger base of capabilities. This is the most dangerous of all tendencies, because, basically, people will give you credit for learning, and then somebody is going to make a mistake, thinking you have learned this technique, and then you're off on your own someday and you didn't learn it at all."



"More ashtray, nurse! For God's sake, more ashtray!"

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Arthur met with Durenberger and his staff before beginning his evaluation, and with Hansen as well, and he conveyed his conclusions to them afterward. He told Hansen he believed that, if anything, the Navy had misled her by not discharging her after she failed the two courses in Officer Candidate School. He said the record showed him that the Navy seemed to have done everything it could to help her succeed.

But Arthur's decision did nothing to sway Hansen and her champions. The Durenberger staff posed a series of questions to Arthur about just how carefully he had reviewed her case. To Arthur's mind, the questions were merely a way of sticking it to the Navy. The staffers would ask a question, and he would answer it, drawing from his reading of the reviews, and his answer would prompt more questions: What facts were considered? What people did he talk with? Arthur, an old-Navy man of honor, thought it was enough that he, the Navy's top aviator and the Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, had personally reviewed her flight records and found the attrition warranted. The Senator's chief staffer, Rick Evans, believed that Arthur was probably right about Hansen, but this wasn't a moment for taking the Navy's word for anything. Evans says, "The concern . . . particularly regarding the Navy, with its history of being dominated by men, was: Did he reach that conclusion because that's what guys do, they all protect each other?" In the spring of 1994, Durenberger said that he would lift his hold on Arthur's nomination to take over the Pacific command only when his questions were satisfactorily answered. Durenberger now says that his questions were eventually answered, but too late for Stan Arthur.

Hansen began to receive sympathetic coverage in the press ("Perhaps the only way women can make their point is to take a few admirals down with the ship," a column in *Time* concluded that August), and the Navy saw its control over the case pass into the hands of Congress. In late 1993, the Minnesota congressional delegation had got the Navy to transfer Hansen to a base in Minnesota, because she was uncomfortable in Florida. ("I wasn't eating or sleeping, I was feeling very threatened. . . . I was being followed, people were showing up at my house. And I was isolated, too; I think they do that on purpose.") From her parents' house, she was constantly on the phone with one Pentagon staffer or another, as the Navy became ever more desperate to resolve the case.

It was all exhausting for Hansen, and she developed mononucleosis. After her recovery, she decided to take a vacation. Her lawyer, provided by the Navy, advised against it; the Navy wanted her to meet with her superiors in Florida. In February, however, she went on a ski holiday in Vail, Colorado. On her first day on the slopes, she fell and seriously hurt her knee. When the Navy made her take a bus to receive treatment at a military facility, it became another cause of grievance.

In May, an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Frederick Pang, asked her lawyer what it would take to get her to accept her attrition. Hansen and her team met with Pang without success. Then another meeting was arranged, this time between Hansen and Navy Secretary Dalton. Hansen had read statements that Dalton made when he came into the job after Tailhook, in which he said, in effect, that the Navy "gets it," and she thought it entirely possible that he might say yes when she told him she wanted to work for him in the Secretariat itself, helping to shape the Navy's policy on women's issues. Dalton offered her only the chance to be a naval flight officer—a "back seater," who handles radar and so on—and Hansen was deeply disappointed. "When I found out the way Secretary Dalton was, it was really hard," she says. "It was, like, here's the man at the very top and he doesn't care. He cares more about his suntan and his bank account than he does about the Navy and what's really going on. He seemed completely uninterested."

In June, Hansen prepared for a second meeting with Pang. She and her mother sat in a Denny's restaurant in Minneapolis and drew up a list of demands that might warrant her ending her fight. These included a written apology from Dalton, the excision of all negative evaluations from her record, return to flight school, time off to attend law school, time and money for civilian flight training, promotion, and, when she finished law school, a service job dealing with women's issues. On being asked now whether she thought those requests were realistic, Hansen says, "It was realistic in what happened, and how they had screwed up, and these were the closest thing to trying to make amends." When her lawyer found out about the list, he strongly disagreed with her tactics; Rick Evans says that he would have advised against her presenting this wish list. But Hansen went ahead, and, accompanied by Crowther, presented her list to Pang. He did not accede to her demands.

MIKE BOORDA stepped into the Hansen case when he stepped into the job as C.N.O. The very forces that had helped bring Boorda to the top job in the Navy now presented him with his first challenge—resolving a sexual-harassment controversy. Boorda agreed with Arthur's disposition of the Hansen case, but he knew that if he fought for Arthur that would once again put the Navy—now his Navy—on the wrong side of a splashy harassment dispute. Boorda finessed a solution.

He met with Arthur, who badly wanted the Pacific job, though it was not his style to appear eager. "I'm not going to be railroaded out of town on this deal, I'm going to fight it," Arthur told his new boss, but he added that he didn't want to be the cause of anything that might hurt the Navy. The Pacific post had always been a Navy job, but technically it could be filled by someone from another of the armed services. Arthur said he wouldn't want the Navy to lose the billet because of him.

"No, no, you can't quit on me," Boorda replied. "You've gotta hang in." But Arthur had given Boorda an opening. "This will be O.K.," Boorda said. "Let me do some work on it." What Boorda proceeded to do, apparently, was maneuver Stan Arthur out of the picture. On the Hill, Sam Nunn assured Boorda that he could get Arthur confirmed, but that doing it might take time. Boorda played up the delay to Arthur, who knew that the other services were already suggesting candidates for the job. Arthur wondered whether General John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be willing to hold the Pacific job open until Arthur's confirmation. Boorda said he would measure the General's mood, and a few days later he gave Arthur bad news. Arthur recalls, "He called me in and said, 'I just talked to Shali, and this isn't going to work.' I said, 'I'll have my letter in in the morning' "—asking for retirement.

Boorda had made his decision: there would be no fight for Stan Arthur. But, technically, it wasn't Boorda's nomination to pull: Arthur had been appointed by President Clinton, and it was up to Clinton's Secretary of the Navy, Dalton, to withdraw Arthur's name. Dalton strongly believed that Arthur was the right person for the position, but Boorda gave him the impression that Arthur might not have the stomach for a political fight—an impression that Dalton has come to suspect was the product of some Boorda spin. "Had I had this to do over again," Dalton says now, "I would have called Stan Arthur into my office personally, and discussed with him his feeling about his fighting this battle with the Senate, and how he personally felt, rather than just taking Admiral Boorda's report to me

MARKED PLAYING CARDS

I took my TV and bass fiddle to the pawnshop.
Then I had my car stolen and everything in it.
This morning I'm down to a windbreaker and house slippers,
But I feel cheerful, even though it's snowing.
This proves she loves me, I said to the crowd
Waiting for the bus. They were afraid to look my way.

I let myself be reduced to rags, I explained.
I marked playing cards to cheat against myself.
All my life I kept raising the stakes, knowing
That each new loss assured me of her complete love.
(The bus was late, so they had to hear the rest.)
I told them that I never met her, but that I was certain
She has a premonition of my existence,
As I do of hers. Perhaps this is the moment
She comes along and recognizes me standing here?

Because my mind was busy with our first kiss,
I didn't hear the bus arrive and leave.
High over the roofs, the sky was already clearing.
I still had the greasy cards in my pocket.
With my bad luck, I surmised, she was due by nightfall.
Shuffling through the snow and shivering,
I was ready to bet the rest of my clothes on her.

—CHARLES SIMIC

about it. Admiral Boorda had worked for me as C.N.O. at that time for about a month, and I hadn't learned how to interpret how he did business and how he communicated."

On Friday, June 24th, the Navy issued a statement announcing that Arthur's nomination would be withdrawn, and that Arthur would retire from the Navy. That news by itself was more than enough to excite antipathy toward Boorda. Retired Rear Admiral Clarence (Mark) Hill, for one, expresses such a feeling. "No. 1, we all knew Mike Boorda was not a warrior," Hill has since said of the Old Guard's reaction to the scuttling of Arthur's nomination. "It was such a traumatic thing for the Navy in general—how could they take it out on a guy who'd proved himself in so many different ways?" And what Boorda did next may have put the damage he had suffered in the Arthur episode beyond repair.

That day, Boorda took a Navy plane to Chicago to visit recruits. It was a big moment for him, not only because he delighted in meeting with the fresh-faced kids but because his destination was the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, his own first stop in the Navy. But, while Boorda was en route, his office heard some disturbing news: among those sailors waiting at Great Lakes to meet the new C.N.O. was Lieutenant (j.g.) Rebecca Hansen.

Hansen had virtually given up her hope of becoming a Navy flier, but when she learned that Boorda was about to visit Great Lakes she spoke to Anne Crowther, and was told that Durenberger's staff would try to arrange a meeting for Hansen with the C.N.O. Upon hearing of this, members of Boorda's staff called his plane to warn him. But Boorda nevertheless agreed to meet with Hansen. After all, he had responded to Tailhook by bringing Paula Coughlin onto his staff, so perhaps a meeting with Hansen could finally end this nettlesome problem.

After Boorda's meeting with the sailors, Hansen was summoned into her commander's office, and there she was granted a private session with the Chief of Naval Operations. This was not a usual procedure, as Hansen herself recognized. "It was bizarre," she says. "And you know what he said to me? He goes, 'Yeah, we don't always talk about you. Sometimes we talk about North Korea and stuff like that.' "

According to Hansen, Boorda first scolded her for disputing the Navy's contention that Larry Meyer had been properly dealt with. Then he ordered his aide out of the room, and gave Hansen a lesson in the Boorda style.

"It started out with him saying, several times, 'I like you a lot,' " Hansen recalls. "And then he goes, 'You know what I like to do with people I like a lot? I like to bring 'em in close.' And, because of my experience of Navy men acting very weird, I thought he was going to say something about giving him a hug, or something. And then he said, 'I like to bring them into the family.' As he went on to explain, it became evident that people at the Pentagon were family. I didn't understand at first."

Then Boorda offered Hansen a job: he told her that he wanted her to come to Washington and work for him at the Pentagon. "He said he wanted me to report directly to him," Hansen says, "because he needed to have somebody tell him the truth."

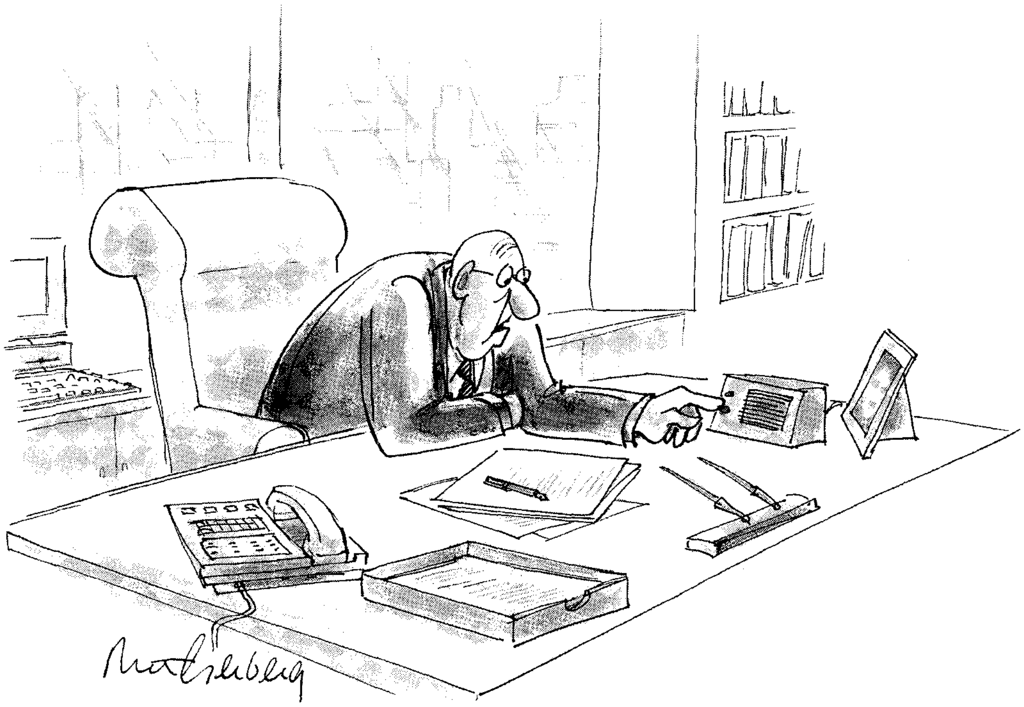
Boorda assured Hansen that they were on the same side, and he asked her if she thought she could work for him. She said yes; the meeting ended happily; and it seemed that the Rebecca Hansen case had finally been resolved.

By the time Boorda returned to Washington, though, he had apparently begun to have second thoughts. Back at the Pentagon, he went directly to Stan Arthur. "He came back,"Arthur recalls, "and he says, 'I just did something really dumb. I've gotta tell you so you don't hear it from somebody else. I saw Rebecca.' "

"Yeah, that's why we called the airplane—because we knew she would be there," Arthur replied.

"I told her that I would do anything—I would give her any other opportunity in the Navy she wanted, not to go back to flight training," Boorda said. "'You name it, you've got it, and you can come back to Washington and work for me.' "

Arthur was nonplussed, and furious. Not only had Boorda acquiesced (at the least) in the undoing of Arthur's career but he had, in one impulsive meeting, effectively reversed the unanimous view of the long review chain that Arthur had endorsed. The Secretary of the Navy had already decided to sign Hansen's discharge papers, and now Boorda was



"Miss Gaines, send in someone who reminds me of myself as a lad."

bringing her to the Pentagon. "I almost walked away from him on that episode," Arthur says. "I thought it really pulled the rug right out from under me, and that really made me feel bad."

But Arthur decided not to make an issue of it. "I chalked it up to another one of those Boorda things," he says. "I thought, Ah, well, this is vintage Boorda, you know? 'There's never a problem I can't fix, just let me.' He just fell into that damned trap again."

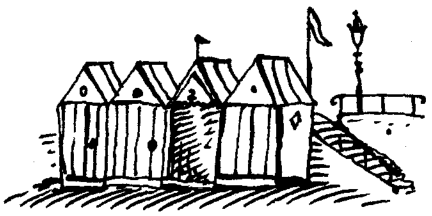
In the eyes of the institution, Boorda had just traded Stan Arthur for Rebecca Hansen, sacrificing the Navy ideal for the perfect symbol of the Navy's post-Tailhook torment. "That curdled the milk, particularly with the retired guys," John Lehman says. "I don't think Mike ever got over that. Even though he admitted it was wrong, he could sense that the old four-stars that used to call him weren't calling him anymore. And I think he really felt that he had lost the allegiance of the system."

Boorda apologized to Arthur personally, and acknowledged his mistake publicly, but the Arthur furor had a lasting effect, both on the way Boorda was perceived through the rest of his tenure and on the institution. On a practical level, Navy leaders began to worry about "the Arthur factor." If a four-star could lose his promotion because he'd backed his subordinates' judgment on a politically sensitive case, how would that affect such judgments in the future? Who would flunk the next Rebecca Hansen? Who would support such a decision? On a personal level, Boorda lost a measure of good will, a kind of regard peculiar to the military culture.

Boorda took some stinging rebukes in a series of opinion pieces, including a *Times* Op-Ed piece in which James Webb wrote that the Arthur decision raised "serious questions about Admiral Boorda's fitness to be Chief of Naval Operations." Elaine Donnelly, a conservative military advocate, accused Boorda of being whipsawed by feminists.

Because the Arthur case was Boorda's first important decision as C.N.O., it became the unintended motif of his tenure—the defining fact, which colored everything else. It began to seem that Boorda couldn't escape the criticism even when he was among friends. Retired Admiral Lee Baggett, a courtly Mississippian, who was a Boorda admirer, tells a story about a dinner party held by a group of admirals, retired and active, in San Diego, at which Boorda was a guest. There was a discernible edge to the evening, and Baggett decided to address the issue straight. "I'm disappointed in you," Baggett told the younger man, admiral to admiral. Boorda brushed Baggett's criticism aside, but the issue hung over the evening, and at the end, after Boorda had given a little pep talk and asked for questions, the wife of one of the senior aviators spoke out. "Admiral Boorda, why aren't you supporting Stan Arthur?" she asked. It was a harsh rebuke, coming from an officer's wife, and Boorda could only answer, "Well, we just don't want to get into a confrontation over this issue. I've inherited all these problems, and I'm playing the cards I was dealt."

In August, 1995, the *Proceedings* of the Naval Institute published a bitter satire of the new, politically correct Navy, written by the former Navy officer Larry Di Rita, which captured the subversive mood of the Navy's traditionalist resistance. The satire presents the weary reflections of Captain Will Keith, a decidedly old-Navy officer who is trapped aboard the U.S.S. Boorda sometime in the multicultural, environmentally sensitive, smoke-free future. The ship is conducting "rain forest preservation research" under the command of a Bangladeshi commodore, as part of a United Nations task force. Training operations have to be postponed because of a "Diversity Stand-Down," ordered by the C.N.O.—who is now called the "Chief of Maritime Services" because the President has been convinced by the U.N. that "Chief of Naval Operations" sounds too warlike. Keith, drawing on a cigar (although he knows he shouldn't smoke, because his cabin is on the same ventilation system as that of the crew nursery), slips into a reverie about Tailhook and its aftermath, and the case of Stan Arthur:



> The whole thing had a perverse logic. That this wartime leader should be lost because of "insensitivity" reflected a turning point for the Navy that had started somewhere between the deserts of the Middle East and the deserts of Nevada. Anyway, the lesson was clear to mid-grade officers like Keith: if flag officers could watch Arthur go down with nary a whimper, what could a lieutenant commander with kids and a mortgage hope to achieve by speaking out?

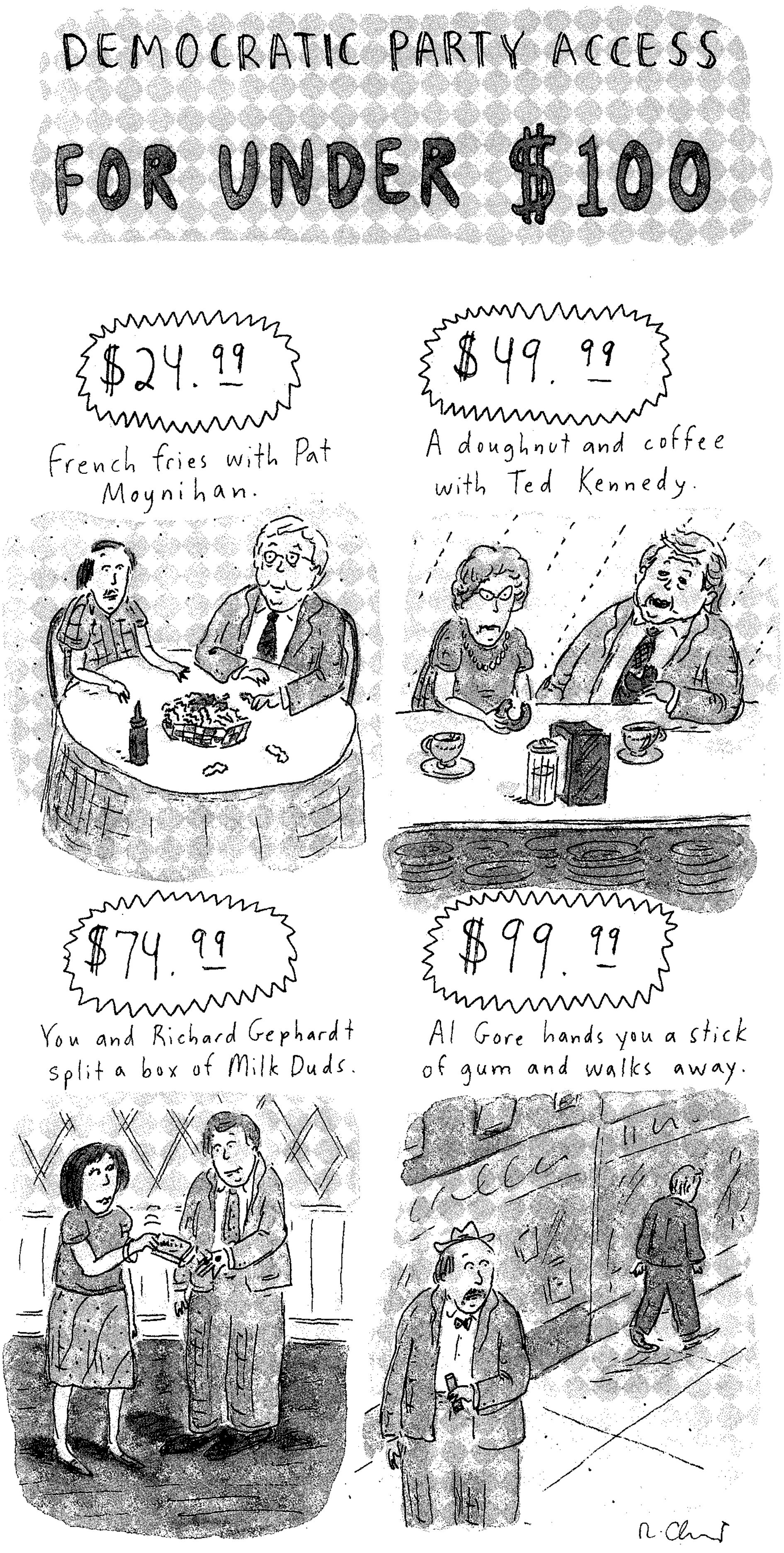
Eventually, the widespread criticism became naked ridicule. This spring, the *Navy Times* published a letter from a Navy officer who called on Boorda to resign, writing, "Adm. Mike Boorda has not only lost the respect of his admirals. [Rather,] every officer from four star to the newest midshipman at the academy has no respect for the man at the top of their organization. . . . Behind his back, admirals often refer to the C.N.O. as 'Little Mikey Boorda.' "

It fell to James Webb to give a unifying context to the gathering discontents—all the floating anxieties and resentments. In a speech in April to the annual conference of the Naval Institute, at Annapolis, Webb summoned the ghosts of the Navy's great men, invoking the creed that guided them and their service: "Where principle is involved, be deaf to expediency." The Navy's current leaders, Webb made clear, had inverted that creed, sacrificing principle for the sake of their own careers. Webb did not mention Admiral Boorda by name, but no one who heard his speech missed the reference. He pleaded the case for Stan Arthur ("One of the finest candidates for commander-in-chief of the Pacific in recent times [was] ordered into early retirement by the Chief of Naval Operations. Who expressed their outrage? Who fought this?") and for Admiral Jack Snyder, an esteemed fighter pilot who had been Paula Coughlin's commanding officer and was reassigned after Tailhook. Webb went on to denounce the "permanent stigma and the destruction of the careers" of a "whole generation of officers" by the political response to Tailhook, and asked, "What admiral has had the courage to risk his own career by putting his stars on the table and defending the integrity of the process and of his people?" He concluded his speech with a challenge: "If the Navy is to regain its soul and its respect, the answer lies in the right kind of leaders. Leaders who understand that the seemingly arcane concepts of tradition, loyalty, discipline and moral courage have carried the Navy through cyclical turbulence in peace and war. . . . It is time to give the Navy back to such leaders." The midshipmen gave Webb a standing ovation—one that the Pentagon could not fail to notice.

If Mike Boorda believed he needed to redeem himself after the Arthur debacle, he had no shortage of opportunity. The ongoing Tailhook purge provided a vast supply of perceived outrages, the most notable of which was the case of a forty-four-year-old commander named Robert Elmer Stumpf.

Stumpf was something close to the Navy's poster-boy ideal—handsome, smart, a brilliant fighter pilot, an unquestioned war hero. In the Gulf War, he was one of the earliest pilots over Baghdad during the first night of the war, flying his F-18 Hornet through heavy anti-aircraft fire to take out Saddam Hussein's radar installations; he flew twenty-two combat missions in all, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross, among other citations for valor. After the war, Stumpf was chosen as commander of the élite Blue Angels squadron, the Navy's demonstration flight team that performs in air shows around the world, and in that role he became the first American to fly a fighter over Moscow since the Second World War. In 1994, he was recommended for command of a carrier air wing which required a promotion to the rank of captain. A promotion board put his name on a list of nominees for captain's rank, and the list was approved by Secretary Dalton and by the Secretary of Defense.

Stumpf's promotion was routinely approved by the Senate that May, along with the promotions of more than a hundred others. But before it took effect the Navy discovered a problem: Stumpf had not been "flagged," though he had been sent to Tailhook in 1991 to receive an award for his fighter squadron as Best in the Navy. The evening after receiving the award, he attended a party organized by his men to celebrate their recent "wetting down"—Navy talk for


DEMOCRATIC PARTY ACCESS
FOR UNDER $100
$24.99
French fries with Pat Moynihan.
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A doughnut and coffee with Ted Kennedy.
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You and Richard Gephardt split a box of Milk Duds.
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Al Gore hands you a stick of gum and walks away.

promotion. For entertainment, they had provided a pair of exotic dancers who danced nude, and one of the women then performed fellatio on one of the men. The Navy Court of Inquiry had subsequently investigated the case, had determined in September of 1993 that Stumpf was not in the room at the time the sex act occurred, and had given him full acquittal. But the important senators on the Senate Armed Services Committee were angry when, in June of 1994, the matter was belatedly brought to their attention. The committee requested that no action be taken on Stumpf's promotion until Dalton provided details of the aviator's Tailhook involvement. It was the month of the Arthur decision, and both Boorda and Secretary Dalton wanted to avoid another cause célèbre; Dalton interviewed Stumpf, reviewed his case, and recommended his promotion to the committee—to no avail.

Stumpf thus became another test case for Boorda, who was caught once again between two imperatives. He could not make an appearance or give a speech without someone's asking him if he would support Stumpf. Boorda sought the counsel of retired Admiral Thomas Moorer, one of his predecessors as C.N.O. and one of the giants cited by James Webb in his Annapolis speech. Moorer gave Boorda some pointed advice: "I told him that people in aviation and the military are very upset about what they just call 'Washington.' I said, 'You've got to face up to the fact that you are viewed as being part of Washington.'" But the Armed Services Committee held its ground.

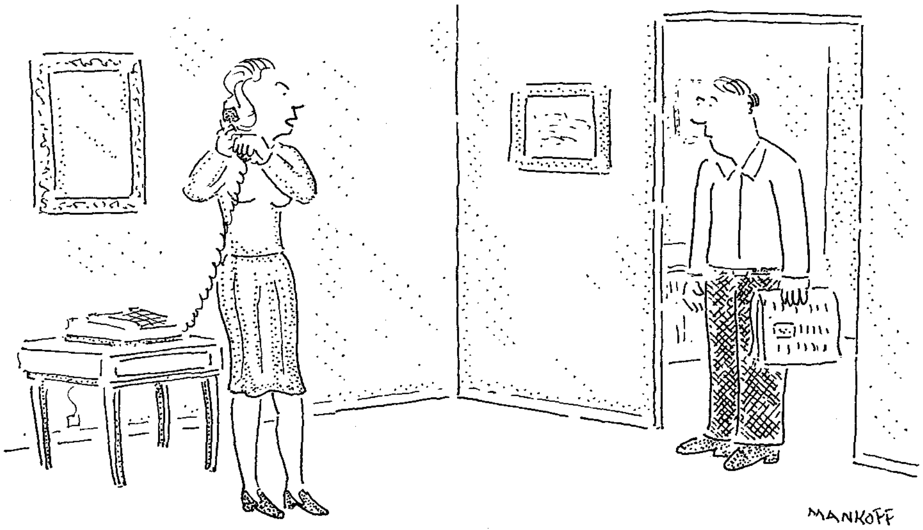
Then, this year, the Navy's promotion board once again selected Stumpf for promotion to captain, clearly challenging Boorda to make a Webb-style, stars-on-the-table gesture. According to Stumpf and his supporters, Boorda decided to make just such a gesture. He met privately with Stumpf, and told him, "I believe that you should be a captain, and I'll support you," and at a conference attended by dozens of admirals and aviators he was reported to have raised his hand and vowed a fight to the finish for Stumpf, even if it cost him his job as C.N.O. "There's absolutely no question in my mind that he was going to apply full pressure to get Stumpf promoted," Moorer says. On Friday, May 10th, at the Naval Aviation Museum, in Pensacola, Boorda, speaking to a Navy crowd, was once again pressed on the Stumpf issue, and once again he pledged his support. It seemed that at last, by taking a firm stand, he might begin to earn back the respect of the Navy's warriors. But then another crisis arose—one that was both personally and professionally threatening to Boorda, and promised another series of public disclosures that would embarrass the Navy.

IT was discovered that Boorda had worn two combat "V"s—the tiny bronze pins signifying the valor of combat service. Medals and ribbons are the military culture's private language: they tell other military people where you've been, whether you risked your life, who you are. At some point after Boorda reached the rank of admiral, in 1985, he acquired the pins (which can be bought at a military exchange), and attached them to his ribbons. Some of Boorda's fellow-officers knew that he had been on two cruises off the coast of Vietnam, but very few knew that he had not been awarded those "V"s.

Of all the traumas that Boorda had experienced up to this point, perhaps none could have been more damaging than this discovery. It did not merely promise another political fight. It was not simply rooted in the question of personal honor. Rather, it entailed honor of a particular sort—a warrior's valor. Boorda, a C.N.O. who had never seen battle, must have felt especially vulnerable on this point, and he had known for some time that it might become an issue. A year earlier, he had been informed that Roger Charles, an Annapolis graduate and a former Marine lieutenant colonel, who was known to many Washington journalists as a military watchdog, had filed a Freedom of Information Act request for paperwork on Admiral Boorda's medals. Boorda, as a former Chief of Naval Personnel, must have known that he was not entitled to wear the "V"s. Nevertheless, on learning of Charles's inquiry he had a Navy lawyer research the question for him, going back to the Vietnam tour aboard the Craig. The lawyer told Boorda that he should not be wearing the "V"s. Boorda took them off, and waited. Weeks passed, and then months, and nothing happened.

But one morning in May, as Boorda was finishing a meeting with Admiral Skip Bowman, the head of Navy personnel, on the subject of admirals' misconduct, Rear Admiral Kendell Pease, the Navy's top spokesman, came in to say that two *Newsweek* reporters were coming to talk about the decorations. Charles had discovered that there was no authorization for Boorda to wear them, Pease said. Charles, after calling an office specializing in the awarding of medals and decorations, and being told that the right to wear a combat "V" had to be specifically enunciated in the award citation, had pursued the matter further and then gone to *Newsweek* with the story. Boorda was momentarily shaken. "What should we do?" he asked Pease. Then, according to Pease, Boorda answered his own question: "We'll just tell the truth."

Boorda had a full schedule that afternoon—a meeting with the Deputy Secretary of Defense at one-fifteen, and a



"Could I have some privacy? It's my boyfriend."

"It means taking a hefty pay cut, but I've decided to accept the position as god of wine."

meeting with President Clinton at the White House at three-thirty, and, now, the *Newsweek* interview, which he had just squeezed in before the White House meeting—so he had planned to eat lunch in his office. The meal had already arrived, but Boorda said he wanted to run home—the C.N.O. residence was at the Washington Naval Yard, just fifteen minutes away—and would be back in time for the *Newsweek* session, and that his Vice-C.N.O. could take his place at the one-fifteen meeting. He ordered his car, and joked with Pease. He'd always told people that someday, when he left the Navy, he was going to open a hardware store somewhere, and work normal hours. "Well, Pease," he said, "I may be opening that hardware store sooner than I thought." He then told his aide that he would drive himself home, and asked the aide to send his driver to the C.N.O. residence. He got in his car, a Navy Lincoln, and drove off.

At home, Boorda typed two notes, one to his wife and one that was meant to be shared with "my sailors." The note to Bettie, according to people familiar with it, was a message of love and regret. The other note was a message of faith in the sailors and the service. He explained that the business with the decorations was an honest mistake, but that the media would leap at it and the inevitable controversy would only add to the Navy's miseries. (Neither of the notes has been publicly released.) Boorda had a gun at home—a .38-calibre pistol lent him by his son-in-law for personal protection, because the Navy Yard is in a relatively rough neighborhood. After finishing the notes, Boorda carried the gun to a far corner of the garden, put the barrel to his chest, near his heart, and pulled the trigger.

• •

BOORDA'S death did not end the Navy's culture war. After Arthur's nomination for the Pacific job was withdrawn, President Clinton nominated Vice-Admiral Richard Macke for the job, and his nomination was quickly approved by the Senate. But Macke's tenure was brief. Unlike Arthur, who had seemed ideally suited to the Pacific post—because he knew the people and he knew the cultures—Macke was relatively unseasoned. After three American sailors were arrested and tried for raping a twelve-year-old Japanese girl in Okinawa, in September of 1995—an episode that greatly strained U.S.-Japanese relations—Macke commented that the sailors should have hired a prostitute. He was out of the job by the end of that day, on orders from the White House.

Commander Bob Stumpf's second promotion to captain was never considered by the Senate. Navy Secretary John Dalton, on being informed that there would be more questions about Tailhook, ordered yet another investigation into Stumpf's involvement. After two and a half hours of interrogation, Stumpf concluded that the purpose of the new investigation was not to clear him but to validate his promotion denial, and he quit the session. Next month, he will leave the Navy.

Rebecca Hansen had never gone to work for Admiral Boorda. She left the Navy at the end of October, 1995—having been classified as disabled because of her skiing injury. She plans to attend law school next fall.

Shortly after Boorda's death, President Clinton nominated Admiral Jay Johnson, the Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, to become his successor. Johnson, an aviator, had been at Tailhook. Word went around the Navy that if he was confirmed he intended to stand up and draw the line—insist that the certification process end. He has not done that, and he probably won't, for, at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee this summer, he said he believes that flagging should continue until all the officers on the certification list have been through the Tailhook promotion "scrub" at least once. Johnson did, however, give an indication of what sort of C.N.O. he means to be. "I'm Mike Boorda-trained, and I'm intensely proud of it," he told the committee. When he was asked by Chairman Strom Thurmond what his top priorities would be if he was confirmed, he replied, "Mr. Chairman, the No. 1 priority will be people. It is people, it will continue to be people." The Senate approved his appointment.

Any political mystery invites speculation—none more than a suicide—and Boorda's death seemed to demand interpretation. Hillary Clinton, herself besieged by the Whitewater and Travelgate controversies, perhaps heard in Boorda's death an echo of her friend Vince Foster's suicide, and concluded that Boorda might have fallen victim to "the relentless and unforgiving glare that people who live in public life are subjected to." John Lehman, voicing the Old Guard view, suggested that Boorda was driven to his death by the political-correctness zealots still hounding the Navy after Tailhook. Charles Gittins, Bob Stumpf's attorney, believes that Boorda was driven to despair by Navy Secretary Dalton's ordering another investigation of the Stumpf case. "I can't prove it, but he didn't shoot himself over the combat 'V's," Gittins says.

But the former C.N.O. Thomas Moorer, the old warrior and a friend of Boorda's, was inclined to let Boorda speak for himself on the matter. After all, the fact that Boorda had troubled to adorn himself with the insignia of valor is the most compelling evidence of their worth, and his reference in his suicide note to the embarrassment he feared for the Navy is a measure of the weight he attached to the discovery. Moorer said recently that Boorda knew that many people believed he had betrayed the Navy culture, "and that is one of the factors, I think, that led to his shooting himself." He went on to explain, "When he found out that *Newsweek* was going to go after him with a full-court press, he was concerned that that would be interpreted as a failure on his part, a weakness in the area of honor—that he'd be seen to have done something that was unbefitting a C.N.O. And he thought he'd put a stop to that . . . by just disappearing from the scene."

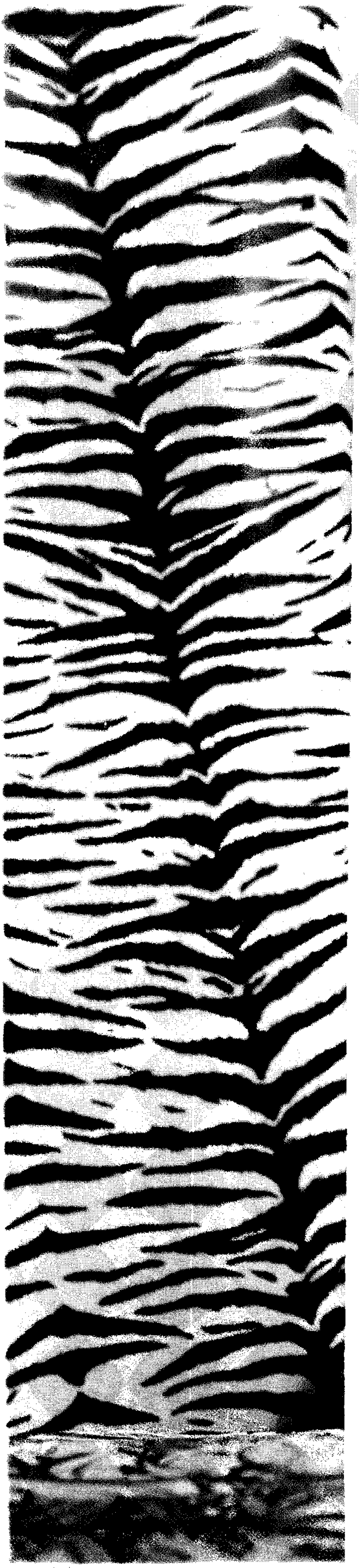
The keepers of the flame had demanded that someone in the leadership finally make a stand, perform some gesture of personal sacrifice and honor. One of the oldest chapters in the warrior-culture script, reaching back in history beyond the samurai to the ancients, is that of the honorable death. Mike Boorda, a bridging figure between a culture of absolutes and one of compromise, chose as his final gesture an absolute act—one that was unambiguously clear. He died a warrior's death. ♦

SHOWCASE BY JOSEF ASTOR

EMPRESS OF EXCESS

For Diana Vreeland, necessity was the mother of self-invention. In the late nineteen-thirties, when she was a young New York matron who had never seen the inside of an office, she got a job at *Harper's Bazaar.* Almost overnight, she became its fashion editor, and for the next several decades, until 1971, when she was abruptly fired from the editorship of *Vogue*, Vreeland was the undisputed queen bee of the fashion world, always rushing forward, ripping up issues at the last minute, exhorting photographers and designers and her harried staff to do it fast and make it new. "I'm always looking for the suggestion of something I've never seen" was the energizing and exhausting credo with which she set the fashion world on its ear time and time again.

Just as Vreeland, who died in 1989, was a one-woman show, so is "Full Gallop," co-written by Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton (not the famous decorator of the same name). Wilson is also the star of the show, which had a brief run at the Manhattan Theatre Club last year and returns to New York on September 24th, at the Westside Theatre. Her performance as Vreeland is not just funny but empathetic and surprisingly moving, especially considering that, as Wilson says, Vreeland was "so completely against displaying her own feelings." Vreeland's peculiarly vivid appearance and manner and her regally nutty pronouncements made her almost a self-parody, but Wilson shows us the self beneath the lacquer of parody. The play, set at a moment when Vreeland was at her most vulnerable—she had just lost her job and had not yet joined the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum—presents her at her most resilient, buzzing around her Park Avenue apartment after a restorative trip to Europe, organizing a dinner party that she can't afford. "I'm back up on my horse," she says on the telephone. "Full gallop!" Wilson's homage to this star turn of a life is a theatrical star burst—a celebration of excess, energy, and the thrill of never looking back. —Nancy Franklin



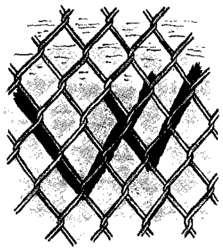
Mary Louise Wilson, photographed in New York.

FICTION

WARM DOGS

Children are the future.

BY PAUL THEROUX



WHEN they received the broker's message that a child was available, Arvin and Hella Rath went home and made love with their clothes on, in a solemn, methodical way, as though mimicking conception. Afterward they took off their clothes and lay exhausted, and speculated about the broker's child. He called himself a broker. But he was probably just an opportunist who knew someone as desperate to sell a child as they were desperate to buy one.

Their bare skin was an alarming color. It was the lurid light from the sunset over the western suburbs. The distant mountain range was actually a mirage made by a low, dense cloud of suspended dust that had turned the sun into a misshapen solitaire the color of dried blood, which lighted their bodies with garish blooms of good health that mocked their sterility. Most of their friends were infected, and—though it was never simple—all of them had found children for themselves. The Raths had tested positive, and it made them single-minded in their urgent search for a child.

Eight times they had been notified, and so the lovemaking had become a ritual, but each time something had gone wrong. They were still hopeful, even though now the risk was great: it meant a trip across the river over that awful bridge to the neighborhood on the East Bank.

"God, I hope it works out," Hella said in a pious tone, adding, like an imploring one-word prayer, "Please."

"We'll be fine," Arvin said. "I can test for anything."

That was one of the challenges. Children were available, but were they healthy? Some had parasites, others had drugs in their system; some were diseased or brain-damaged, some were unbalanced. Many had no papers—twice the Raths had been caught that way, offered smuggled infants by brokers. You could not trust anyone, which was why Arvin had discreetly advertised for his own broker and ignored all the ones who had come to him through the network, having heard that the Raths were desperate.

When Hella told him that they had to go across the bridge, he did not wince as their friends had at the idea of the East Bank.

Hella said, "It's one of those neighborhoods."

Arvin said nothing. He had a plan. You needed a plan. The East Bank police were private, but that was only part of the problem. Many of the neighborhoods were sealed, like fortress villages, and were dangerous to outsiders. These days, only humans were worth money, and so some were valuable and some were cheap, and a child might cost anything.

The prospect of getting a child gave the Raths the courage to risk the bridge. They knew that what they were doing was illegal, that what they were planning was an abduction. Yet a child meant everything to them, not only because they were sterile: a child was the future.

They had not told anyone about the broker. Which of their friends knew anything about the East Bank, anyway? The previous eight disappointments had been shared and piteously clucked over. Even the persistent party talk—"We got one in Poland," "The Goldstones found one in Mexico," all that—did not draw them out. You might have thought the talk was about puppies. The Raths, who had had many, were sick of pets and were no longer comforted by warm dogs.

Nor were they dismayed by the adoption stories that turned out badly: the Bences' Romanian infant, who had to be destroyed after a year; the Feericks' boy Ivor, from Russia, who had shot himself in a motel on his twelfth birthday; all the runaways, adoptees who had fled to places like the East Bank and lived like the drifters or the squatters.

"I can test for epilepsy, I can find viruses, I can look into heredity, I can diagnose depression and potential malfunction, I can do brain scans," Arvin said. "I can find anything."

He had confidence in his tests, but where was the child who could pass them? Five times he had examined infants in brokers' offices and found dysfunction or systemic problems.

Arvin was a lighting engineer, Hella an architect. Their apartment, an entire floor of a Kingsbury tower, was vast and beautiful; it lacked a child, but that was all. They had the virus, but that was no disgrace. Half the people they knew had it. You were inconvenienced by it; you were sterile; you lost your teeth; you got implants.

A piercing *peep-peep* filled the room. Someone was calling.

Hella slipped the phone over her left hand and activated it. "Hello?"

"Calling the Raths," the voice said. "This is Doc."

The broker, Hella mouthed to Arvin, and then increased the speaker volume and said, "Is it still on?"

"Sooner than I thought. Can you come first thing tomorrow? Say six?"

That threw them, and Arvin's face was pale and doubtful.

"Why so early?" Hella said, prompted by Arvin's suspicious stare.

"The bridge will be clear and it'll be easier for you to find us."

"We're not finding you," Arvin said suddenly, facing the tiny phone. "You find us—in Elmo. The station parking lot. I've got a red van."

The puzzled voice at the other end said, "A van?"

"For my instruments. I'm running some tests."

FILIP PAGOWSKI

"You're better off on the surface streets."

"Elmo," Arvin said, insisting.

What followed was not so much silence as scarcely audible consternation, like someone mumbling to himself or to another person close by—a lengthy murmuring pause.

"O.K.," the man said at last.

"How do you know Elmo?" Hella asked afterward.

"I was there about twenty years ago. We had a cleaner who lived in Elmo. It was marginal then. But can it have changed that much?"

As they drove across the bridge, the East Bank seemed greener, denser, less settled to Arvin than it had all those years ago. On the horizon ahead, the sun at dawn was the same dusty solitaire they had seen last evening, but there were trees here, long grass, and the old style of houses, and fences that were low and unthreatening. There were empty streets where they had expected savages.

"I feel right at home," Arvin said.

As he spoke they cleared the end of the ramp and the roadside trees ceased to drum against the sides of the van, and then, where they least expected it, near an embankment wall and a sign directing them to Elmo, there was a checkpoint and a policeman. Arvin slowed the car to a crawl as he approached the barrier.

"Howdy," the policeman said in a friendly way. The steel barrier was mesh. Such barriers had been designed to snare tanks and armored vehicles and rogue trucks.

The policeman smiled and took a step back to see the van's plates. His name tag was printed "Seely." He was casual in the way of contract police. His boots weren't shined, his badge was slightly crooked. They were all overworked, nor were they paid as well as the state troopers. But the sight of the policeman—particularly when Arvin saw that he was with a child—was reassuring.

The child was just inside the checkpoint booth, sitting on a stool, and even though it was a low one, his feet didn't touch the ground. He was kicking them, driving his heels against the stool's hard legs with a frenzied East Bank vitality as he stabbed at the wall, writing "RONG DOGZ."

"Where you headed?"

Arvin hesitated.

The policeman said, "I'm asking you for your own good."

"Elmo. Is there a travel advisory?"

"Not today. But you want to be real careful." Gesturing with his weapon, he pointed to the back of the van. "You got a load?"

"We're empty," Arvin said. "See you got a little helper."

When the boy heard this, his fleshy lips parted and his face drew tight, making his teeth protrude. They were new teeth, just grown, and bulked in his mouth, looking large and unused.

"Sure do," the policeman said, and waved them on.

They reached the surface streets and had their first sight of local people—children, probably kids of drifters and squatters. But they were not scavenging, as people said. They looked just like the privileged children across the river who played outside, except that these were much younger. There were terrible stories of brokers who had snatched such children, saying, *It's not kidnapping—it's a form of rescue*, and found themselves with vicious, diseased, or uncontrollable children who had no papers and had to be impounded.

"Let's make this quick," Arvin said as he pulled into the Elmo parking lot and saw a cluster of people waiting there.

A man in a khaki shirt and khaki trousers, perhaps an old Army uniform, was surrounded by about a dozen children, mostly boys, none of them more than ten or eleven. Several of the children watched Arvin and Hella intently as they parked the van. The others were playing. One boy was operating a handheld instrument and earphones—a game, perhaps. They all seemed to be shouting much too loudly, and that was how Hella had been able to tell their ages—their voices hadn't broken. And their teeth, too, were large and ill-fitting and crooked. Nothing about these children was more upsetting to Hella than these adult-sized teeth in their small, ten-year-old jaws.

Arvin loathed the sight of the man with these children, the exploiter and the urchins.

"I'm Doc," said the man in khaki, shuffling forward through the crowd of children. "Can I see your I.D.s?"

He was older than they had imagined him—too old, perhaps, to be the father of any of these children, but you never knew.

As Arvin showed his I.D., a boy with long, stringy green-tinted hair crept up close to him, staring at his phone. "I'm on an open channel," Arvin said, so as to caution them all. And then, "Can we see the child? I want to run some tests."

Doc sat down on a bench and tapped his own phone. He was watched intently by several other boys; the one with long hair, perhaps the eldest—twelve at most—wore big, borrowed-looking shoes, probably expensive, though they did not fit, and a shirt that hung to his knees like a dress. A girl walked behind him and, without meeting her eyes, the boy turned and reached out and pinched her arm. He stared at her, defying her to scream. But she did not cry out. She pressed her lips together and squinted in dumb suffering.

Surely Doc had seen the boy do this? But the man said nothing.

The children looked bored and impatient and captive—they did not want to be here, Hella could tell. They looked warm and thirsty. She now remembered the child at the checkpoint scribbling "RONG DOGZ" on the wall of the policeman's booth.

Hella said, "Are they for sale, too?"

She had spoken softly, so that only the man would hear, yet the long-haired boy had heard, and he gave her a sudden look of scowling malevolence, and hissed through his clamped-together teeth. Hella was so startled that she gasped for breath.

"Here he is," Doc said.

Hella was searching among the big-toothed children when she felt her leg being clutched, and she turned to see a small child trying to hug her. He was bigger than she expected but still so much younger than any of these other children that he seemed charming and infantile.

"In perfect shape," Doc was saying. "Mixed race. Parents couldn't keep him. They need the money. Three isn't old."

Again she thought, *Who are we taking him from?* but then she recalled the nursery, already furnished with a crib, a high chair, a scale, a cupboard of toys, sheets and pillows and stuffed animals, the rocking horse, all the accumulated paraphernalia of their many attempts to find a child. Hella knew she was being sentimental, for part of her yearning to have a child was also her fantasy of cuddling an infant, feeding it, changing it, teaching it to speak and walk. Yet there was a logic in his being three—it was as though this were the child they had begun to search for three years ago, when they abandoned their last pets.

"He's very bright. You can give him any test you like," the man said. "It'll be easier, you know. Being older, he'll be more coöperative."

Arvin was nodding: he accepted this as reasonable.

"He's got papers," the man said. "And if the tests don't work out you can call the whole thing off."

Arvin made a familiar gesture that meant to Hella: *What have we got to lose?*

The child was clean; he seemed affectionate; he was lightly dressed this warm morning, in a shirt and shorts. He had teeth, too—big teeth. When the child tried to kiss Hella, Arvin stepped forward to protect her, but Hella let herself be kissed, and then hugged the child. She longed for the child, but didn't want to allow herself to feel any longing. If Arvin cleared him, then she would claim him and embrace him properly.

"What's his name?" Arvin asked.

Before Doc could answer, the child said, "My name is Corbin"—he had heard, he understood, he was so alert. His teeth were gleaming. "I want to go home with you. I want you to be my mummy."

Hella led him to Arvin. She knew he wanted to begin the tests.

Arvin said, "He's three? He looks older—six, at least."

"Big for his age," Doc said. And then, "I'm going to have to take your phones."

"Wait a minute," Arvin said. He stepped back in a protective reflex.

"Or else how about moving some money into my account?"

"What is this?" Arvin said, and fear strengthened him. Something was wrong. A small boy gripped his wrist suddenly from behind and snagged the phone. Arvin turned and saw that Hella had been surrounded, and that Doc was smiling.

Hella called out, "No!"—she was frantic—and her scream seemed to work: the small toothy children and their keeper jostled and scattered just as a police car skidded toward them in the parking lot.

A voice exploded from a loudspeaker, "Stand back!"

It was the policeman, Seely, throwing open the doors of his armored car, and Arvin and Hella scrambled in.

"Didn't I tell you to be careful?" The insignia on the brim of his helmet was chipped.

Arvin said gratefully, "How did you find us?"

"You think it was hard?"

They were still thanking him when they noticed the small head of a small boy in the front seat. The child turned to face Arvin, showing his teeth. It was the boy who had been kicking the stool in the checkpoint booth.

Arvin said, "Wait. The van's back there."

The policeman said nothing. He was

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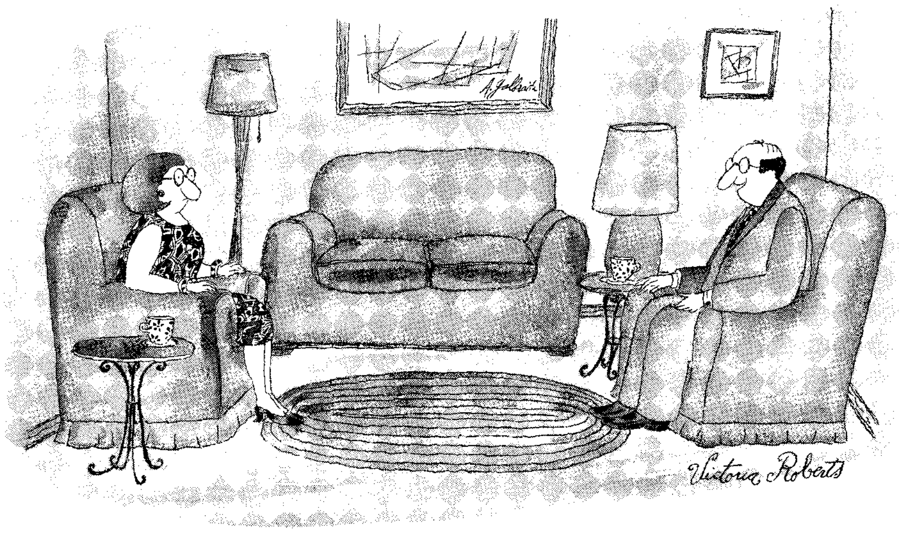


"Tonight is open mike, n'est-ce pas?"

• •

driving fast down an alley between two tall buildings.

"Where are you taking us?"

The policeman started to say something. "Listen," he said, when the small boy beside him interrupted furiously, saying, "Shut up!"

Arvin realized that the boy was speaking to the policeman, not to him, and he spoke with such anger that the policeman flinched.

"Sorry," the policeman said.

He kept driving. The place was blighted. It was not just the decayed buildings and broken streets; there was not a single green thing. The trees had all been cut down, randomly and in a wasteful way, not for fuel—the limbs were strewn about. The grass had been trampled or poisoned or burned; the place had been mindlessly vandalized. It had the look of violence: broken signs, uprooted poles, smashed windows, scribbled and misspelled obscenities and big bewildering scrawls: "RAT ROOLZ" and "RONG DOGZ" and "YUNGSTAZ" and "DANJAH FREEX" and "NO MERSI" and "WORRYERZ."

Arvin muttered the words disgustedly.

Ahead was a warehouse, and there seemed to be at least one face at each window—some had more, crowding to see out.

The wide warehouse door swung open to admit the car, and inside Arvin could see the broker, Doc. He was seated on a ridiculous small chair, among the children. The car doors were snatched open, and the children crowded forward with spears made of sharpened steel rods and poked at Arvin and Hella. They got out of the car protesting and pleading.

The child with stringy hair and the long dresslike shirt held a weapon and said in a quacking voice to the policeman, "Why didn't you blindfold them?"

The policeman said, in a tone of respectful explanation, "Because blindfolds spook them."

"Blindfold them now!" the child said. "Wrong dogs!"

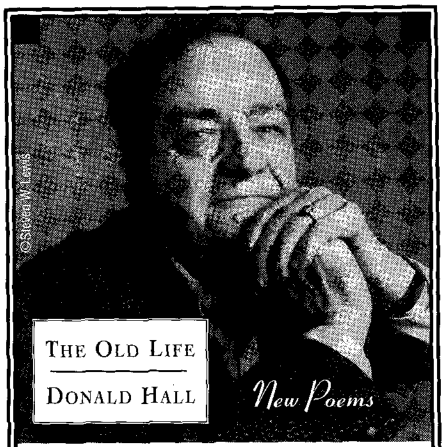
Doc said softly, as though to calm the children, "You want me to put out the ransom call?"

"Go away," the first boy said and turned to Hella, and as the stinging blindfold went over her eyes she had a last look at the big, malevolent teeth that had frightened her back at the parking lot when she asked, "Are they for sale, too?"

Another child began to screech, "Get out! Get out! Leave us alone! No mercy!"

In their darkness, afraid and unable to move, Arvin and Hella heard the two men leaving, muttering as they went out the door, and the large door shutting, an eclipse of light and sound that Hella could imagine through her blindfold. The children came closer. She could sense their damp faces and heard them breathing eagerly through their mouths, like warm dogs.

Hella heard a child's voice say, "This one is mine," and she cried out as the small fingers touched her. ♦



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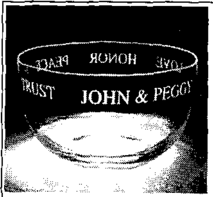

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BOOKS

LEASTNESS

Can biography elucidate Samuel Beckett's austere art?

BY GEORGE STEINER

The fire caught in 1945, after Samuel Beckett's grim experiences, first in the French Resistance and in hiding, then as a medical orderly at Saint-Lô. Very much in the manner of Dante, his guardian spirit, Beckett was lit by a vision. "Krapp's Last Tape" records a barely concealed version:

> What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire.

Now the credo was bleakly radiant: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." After the great terror and massacres, "the slightest eloquence becomes unbearable." Joyce, until then the Master, the begetter of Beckett's ambitions, was no longer exemplary. There was no use anymore rearranging words into prodigal rhetoric. Words had proved so distant from the facts of the inhuman, from "the authentic weakness of being." Only Lear had it right: "Nothing will come of nothing." Assuredly not in Joyce's overwhelming tongue, or in the music of Yeats or Swift or the other virtuosos out of Beckett's native Ireland. To voice that "nothingness," one switches languages. Three short novels were composed in French between May of 1947 and January of 1950: "Molloy," "Malone Meurt," and "L'Innommable." Of two new books—James Knowlson's exhaustive chronicle "Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett" (Simon & Schuster; $35) and Lois Gordon's "The World of Samuel Beckett, 1906-1946" (Yale; $28.50), which unavoidably duplicates Knowlson for the relevant period—neither quite grasps what was at stake.

As long as Latin was the medium of intellect and knowledge, there had been bilingual poets—Milton, for example. The relative marginality of Poland had produced Joseph Conrad; that of Ireland Oscar Wilde ("Salomé" was writ*ten initially in French). But the muta*tion of Beckett is of a different force. Here a tongue not native to a writer becomes the immediate vehicle of his innermost genius. Together with "En Attendant Godot," written between October of 1948 and January of 1949, the "Molloy" trilogy belongs to the masterpieces of modern French literature. But these texts tower no less in twentieth-century English. This is the crux. A close study of Beckett's self-translations, of the cat's cradle of transfer and adaptation that he wove between French and English, between English and French in his thirty-one plays, in his fiction, in his parables, shows that both languages had become indispensable to him. Uncannily, Beckett locates in the language into which he is metamorphosing himself the precise equivalent to the joke, the argot, the stroke of local color in the original. Yet "original" may well be the wrong, flattening term. At levels masked from us, Beckett may have initiated the performative act at a depth, in a sort of volcanic magma, in which French and English (together, one suspects, with shards of Italian, which he had studied thoroughly at Trinity College, Dublin, and with Joyce) are fused into "something rich and strange." It was as if he had harnessed the undifferentiated preconscious of word and grammar before Babel.

The paradox is this: In Joyce, in Nabokov, the polyglot impulse generates a superabundance of stylistic invention; the voices grow more and more voluminous. In Beckett, the exact opposite occurs; out of an extreme pressure of linguistic-stylistic means a nakedness is born. The artist strips and strips and strips. First to the bone, then to the bone's shadow. All is "Lessness" (1969):

> No sound no stir ash grey sky mirrored earth mirrored sky. Grey air timeless earth sky as one same grey as the ruins flatness endless. In the sand no hold one step more in the endlessness he will make it. It will be day and night again over him the endlessness the air heart will beat again.

Or take the famous duo on the mound of earth in "Waiting for Godot." The exchanges shorten. The haunting cadence is that of monosyllables. There is a precedent to this paring down in Pascal, whom Beckett treasured. Also in the Authorized Version's rendition of Ecclesiastes—as true a source as any for Beckett's monodies. The evident parallels, however, lie in music and in art. Webern was working along comparable lines. So were the practitioners of white-on-white or black-on-black minimalist paintings. The nearest counterpart to the dynamic void of Beckett's "Texts for Nothing," to his aesthetic of abstention, is, of course, Giacometti. The two men knew each other. Almost absurdly, the classic photographs of Beckett—the head an eagle's skull, the eyes like hot ash—imply the drawings of Giacometti. "Then all as before again. So again and again. And patience till the one true end to time and grief and self and second self his own" ("Stirrings Still," 1988). A second self that might have been one of those Giacometti pencil figures striding, with enormous blind power, into an unheard wind.

Beckett advanced systematically into negation—one of his playlets runs forty seconds—out of a wealth of personal life and erudition. This magician of minimalism was in certain respects as academic, as mandarin as Borges. James Knowlson's inventory is detailed (and,

The solitary playwright: Maybe the scholar in Beckett persuaded him to try and set the record straight.

TULLIO PERICOLI

again, Gordon traverses nearly the identical ground, though less thoroughly). Beckett had been a stellar scholar and research student in modern languages and literature at Trinity College. He had added a considerable knowledge of German to his superb French and Italian. Philosophical thought was vital to him. St. Augustine, Spinoza, Berkeley, and Descartes have their more or less explicit say in his theatre and fables of thought. It was his singular, though also profoundly Irish, cunning to bring into shaping collision the sphere of the Divine Comedy, "King Lear," "Timon of Athens," and the metaphysicians with that of barroom bawdy, the circus, the music hall, and the Tour de France. (Report has it that during one season a M. Godeau always came late.) If Giacometti is one of Beckett's brethren, Buster Keaton is another.

"Waiting for Godot" consumes its manifold inspirations into a marvel of concentrated abstinence and wit. But the sources are instrumental. Music-hall cross talk and the slapstick of both the circus and silent film underlie the choreography of syllable and gesture. There are echoes, more or less ironized and archly sonorous, of Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger. As Mr. Knowlson emphasizes, the four personae—Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, and Lucky—have names that are cosmopolitan, polyglot finds. But the landscape in which they mime their own rhetoric is that of the Irish tramp, of the Irish tinker sleeping it off in a ditch. Beckett readily admitted his debt to Synge's cruel, desolate West of Ireland. Even more telling, I believe, is the lone tree and the parable of original sin in Yeats's "Purgatory." (It would be worth staging that brief masterpiece—as blinding and hot to the touch as dry ice—as a prologue to "Godot.")

IS biography pertinent to so austerely allegorical an art? Beckett's attitude was oddly inconsistent. His obsession with privacy became legend. Both he and his wife, Suzanne—"Our marriage is a marriage of bachelors"—regarded the Nobel Prize and world fame as disastrous. Beckett strove ferociously to keep at bay a more and more devouring journalistic-academic industry, to find refuge in the solitude essential to his writings. Yet the Knowlson biography is based on extensive interviews with Beckett himself and assembled with his collaboration. It may be that the scholar in Beckett persuaded him to try to set the record straight. Names, mundane incidents, itineraries of the perpetual traveller, theatre gossip cascade from Knowlson's pages. Little is too minute to escape the eye: Beckett's taste in food, his garb, the hotels at which he roomed. Sex seems to have been both transient and significant. Once more, there is something of a paradox in the simultaneity of monastic solipsism—the hermit, the searcher-out of deserts—and erotic largesse. It is Joyce, the all-embracing, who was, by contrast, monogamous.

Beckett was lucky in his teachers, his patrons, and his friends. From the outset, remarkable men and women, from the Irish honeycomb of learning and letters, from the Surrealist coven in Paris, from the province of art, theatre, and music, fell under Beckett's spell. Peggy Guggenheim responded ardently to the unknown young teacher's unforced charisma. The quiet wildness of the falcon while its hood is still on struck those who met Beckett as he flitted back and forth between Paris, Dublin, London, and Berlin. Mr. Knowlson is an inexhaustible recorder of these manifold contacts. As Beckett entered on fame and fortune, he found the ideal publisher. The deployment of his works, the confidence he acquired in his own needs, however experimental, owe a formidable debt to Jérôme Lindon, the head of Éditions de Minuit. The affinity between the two men is one of the crucial chapters in the history of modern literature. Even the Minuit format—spiky, elegantly abstinent—seems ready-made for Beckett. As translators, theatrical impresarios, actors, and thesis-breeders swarmed to Beckett's door, Lindon did everything in his power to keep them off Beckett's back. When the telegram from Stockholm arrived, on October 23, 1969, it was Lindon who more or less kept Beckett in hiding.

But, feel and proclaim as he might that "solitude is paradise," Beckett could not stay away from rehearsals of his plays. Every stage gesture, every inflection, every breath, especially in the late "zero point" miniatures, which are largely a matter of voiced or unvoiced respiration, was to Beckett of the essence. The players whom he subjected to a relentless vocal, choreographic, and mimetic schooling, whom he drilled into total exhaustion, came to love and hate him in roughly equal measure. Beckett's legal imbroglios with producers who threatened or ventured to depart from his instructions—instructions as precise, as technically detailed as any in an intricate musical score—became notorious. There is a determinant sense in which a Beckett text for performance is only a draft; exact enactment is indispensable to the completed opus. This is why the stagings of "Happy Days" and "Krapp's Last Tape" under Beckett's ferule are unrecapturably elemental to those texts. No less mastery and will went into the production of plays for radio, such as "All That Fall" and "Embers." Beckett came to accept television productions. Where audio- and videotapes have survived, they constitute an essential part of the works. Or, to put it another way, the late devices, in their absolute "nullity"—a mouth panting and screaming out of a blackness stage rear—are not meant to make sense only on the page. Their possible validation is that of projection onstage, onscreen, or via the radio microphone. Not many playwrights after Shakespeare were as intimately theatrical. Knowlson's narrative of these involvements, of Beckett's erotic-creative partnership with Billie Whitelaw and of his work with Patrick Magee, is invaluable.

Beckett's health began failing in 1986. Death was rapidly thinning out the circle of his intimates. He was an often sardonic connoisseur of infirmity and decay. The death of Roger Blin, who had launched "En Attendant Godot," saddened him further. His daily routine, in a spartan convalescent home, grew more and more abstemious. His last poem, "Comment Dire"—"How are we to say it?," "What is there to say?"—could have served as epitaph. Suzanne died in July, 1989, Beckett the following Christmas weekend. One last time, discretion and a refusal of any waste motion obtained.

OBVIOUSLY, there was evolution and change in Beckett's style. This is made clear by S. E. Gontarski's collection of "The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989" (Grove; $23). There is a glorious dash of sub-Joycean kitsch in "Assumption" (1929):

Then it happened. While the woman was contemplating the face that she had overlaid with death, she was swept aside by a great storm of sound, shaking the very house with its prolonged, triumphant vehemence, climbing in a dizzy, bubbling scale, until, dispersed, it fused into the breath of the forest and the throbbing cry of the sea.

How much that storm had altered by the time of "Imagination Dead Imagine" (1965):

> No, life ends and no, there is nothing elsewhere, and no question now of ever finding again that white speck lost in whiteness, to see if they still lie still in the stress of that storm, or of a worse storm, or in the black dark for good, or the great whiteness unchanging, and if not what they are doing.

Now the achieved mode is in sight ("Stirrings Still"):

> Rest then before again from not long to so long that perhaps never again and then again faint from deep within oh how and here that missing word again it were to end where never till then. In any case whatever it might be to end and so on.

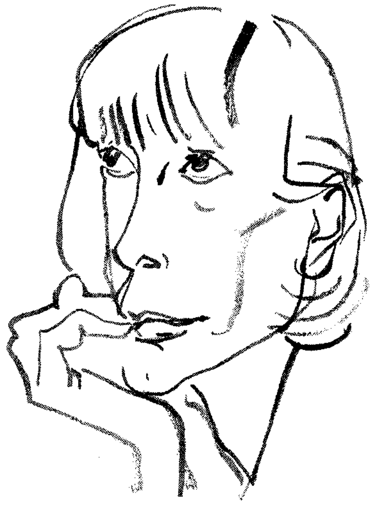
The clipped wonder of black humor, of the human soul's slapstick run-in with annihilation, is in that "and so on": Beckett's tune, unmistakable and hypnotic.

Yet the sense of a certain routine, of the formulaic, nags: the omission of connective parts of speech, of punctuation; the ruse of drawn-out reiteration; the insistence on the monosyllabic. That bicycle race is there, with its faintly hysterical circularity and ennui, and the fall guy tumbling down over and over again with the endless fusillade of custard pies in his blank face. Samuel Beckett has made English prose lose weight. "Waiting for Godot" has moved the limits of the theatre, drawing them inward, compacting them, with a rigor comparable to that of Racine (whom Beckett prized). Will the vision as a whole retain its impact? Will it come to be known as a despairing afterword to the emptying of man in twentieth-century war, torture, and genocide? It is difficult to say. But how much richer, though no less subversive, a humanity radiates, darkly if you will, out of even the most laconic of Kafka's parables. ♦

AMERICAN PASSIONS

A novel for lost people.

BY JOHN WEIR



Joan Didion

EDUARD ERLIKH

JOAN DIDION is one of the few novelists still passionate enough about the idea of America to make it the subject of fiction. She has published five novels over three decades, and each book has come closer to the source of our national psychosis, where romance and reality collide and the outcome is loss. Her novels have been underrated, perhaps because of critical resistance to a writer who can do too much. Yet her fiction is no less indispensable than her five books of essays and reportage are. Together, her works provide a chronicle of personal and political change over the past thirty years, told in the irresistibly observant tone of a compulsively self-reflective prose stylist. You can hear her fictional voice echoed not just in writers like Ann Beattie, Bret Easton Ellis, and Deborah Eisenberg but in the stunned sound of alternative bands with names like Pavement, and in the ironic inflections of contemporary poets like Dean Young and Lisa Lewis.

Like Didion's previous novels, "The Last Thing He Wanted" (Knopf; $23) unfolds the way a friendship does. There's the shock of a first impression as Didion, or, rather, her unnamed nar-

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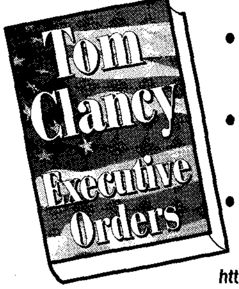

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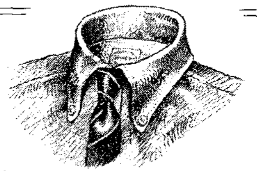

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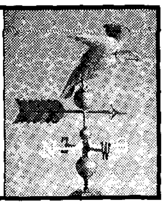

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rator—"the not quite omniscient author"—introduces the heroine, Elena McMahon. Elena is from the first moment startlingly out of place, like a stranger at a party who has arrived with a friend. The narrator wants to tell you what's interesting about her but doesn't know where to begin. There's a rush of biographical information, offered quickly, uncertainly. Then the narrator hangs back and lets Elena make her own moves.

What she does is mysterious, and cannot be said to constitute a plot, exactly, which is Didion's point. Indeed, as the narrator states, "the telling of a life tended to falsify it." Elena is a comfortably upper-middle-class woman who leaves her husband, a California oil tycoon, and gets a job as a campaign stringer for the Washington *Post*. Then she leaves the *Post* to care for her sick father, a small-time arms dealer—in the course of which she ends up taking his place in a business deal involving Contra "resupply." In her last incarnation, she's a woman in a white dress in a hotel coffee shop on a scruffy island in the Caribbean "reading the classified page of the local paper and sitting alone at a round table set for eight."

That's how Treat Morrison finds her. Morrison is the State Department operative whose job is to "fix things." He has the makings of a romantic hero, a Hollywood concoction, but his role is truncated. Didion lingers over him only long enough to evoke the romantic readiness for hope which suffuses all her fiction like nerve gas. Her language, though, remains grounded in the particular. Didion is passionate about what she calls "the technical": names and numbers and procedures, concrete things—whatever is simple and real. She tells you, for instance, how to set up an airline runway in the tropics. If this seems unlikely to matter to anyone but novelists and technocrats, Didion suggests that it's exactly the kind of information that is useful to a "significant minority of the population at large"—Americans living "on the far frontiers of the Monroe Doctrine."

Ernest Hemingway once said that he wanted to write so that you knew on every page what time it was and where the characters were. In Didion's journalism, the sense of time and place is so acute that it's impossible to get off an airplane in any of the cities she has written about—especially New York, Los Angeles, or Miami—without wondering if the flush of nostalgia you feel is for something you've done there or for something you've read about Didion doing. In her fiction, however, she's increasingly suspicious of place, and worried that time, like history, is impossible to fix. Things like climate and accessories seem more reliable. You don't always know where Elena is or why, but you do know how hot it is and what she's wearing. At the moment when Elena's sense of being dislocated is most acute, she's alongside a landing strip, somewhere in Costa Rica. She's in the dry grass with a man who has a shaved head and is singing the theme song to "Bonanza." The plane that just unloaded her and its cargo of antitank and antipersonnel fragmentation mines is jetting into the ozone layer. She has no ride home. Her eyes are shut, and she's wearing a black silk shift from Bergdorf Goodman, sunglasses, and an NBC Sports baseball cap, "its familiar peacock logo smeared with diesel fuel."

There's an animating tension in Didion's fiction between her achingly sure control as storyteller and stylist and the numbing vagueness of the people she depicts. (The narrator writes of her impatience with conventions of writing—"with exposition, with transitions, with the development and revelation of 'character.' ") Didion's novels are thus simultaneously lucid and surreal. She's both the only current novelist engaged enough to capture the language and manners of our government-by-espionage and the only one capable of sentences as shimmeringly seductive and mysterious as "The best story I ever told was a reef dream." You want to spin that sentence in the air and admire how cleanly it falls. And you want to excavate its meaning: What's a reef dream? A dream is disorienting, but it adheres to its own particular logic. By contrast, the real-life events on which novels are traditionally based have lately taken on a quality that almost defies their being retold. "This is something different," Didion's narrator writes about the story she's driven to tell. The result is entrancing—a dream without the logic of a dream, the way we live now. ♦

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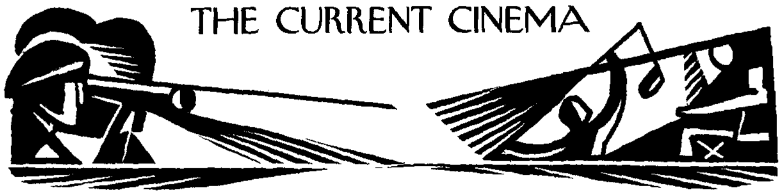
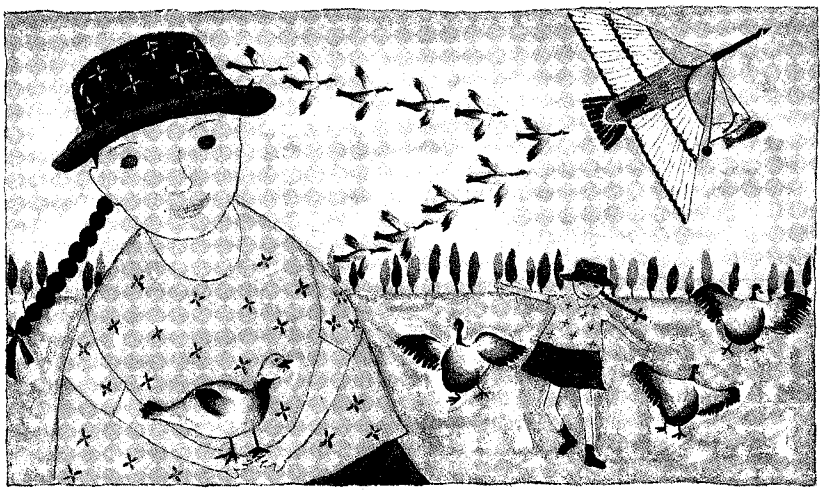


THE CURRENT CINEMA

GOOSE BUMPS

The open air of "Fly Away Home"; the closed-in space of "American Buffalo."

BY ANTHONY LANE

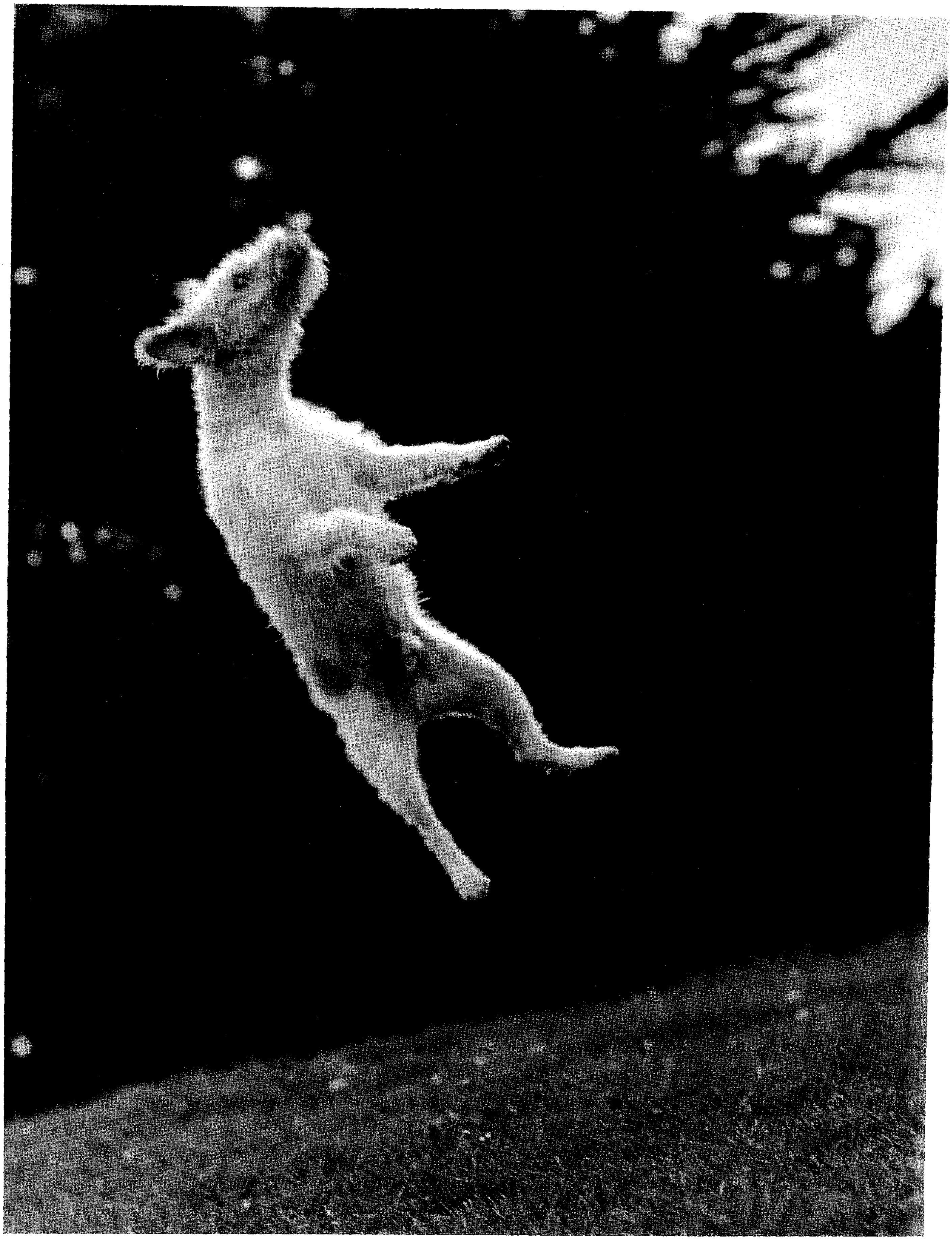


Teen-ager with goslings: Anna Paquin in a film that takes you to the core of a family without stooping to family values.

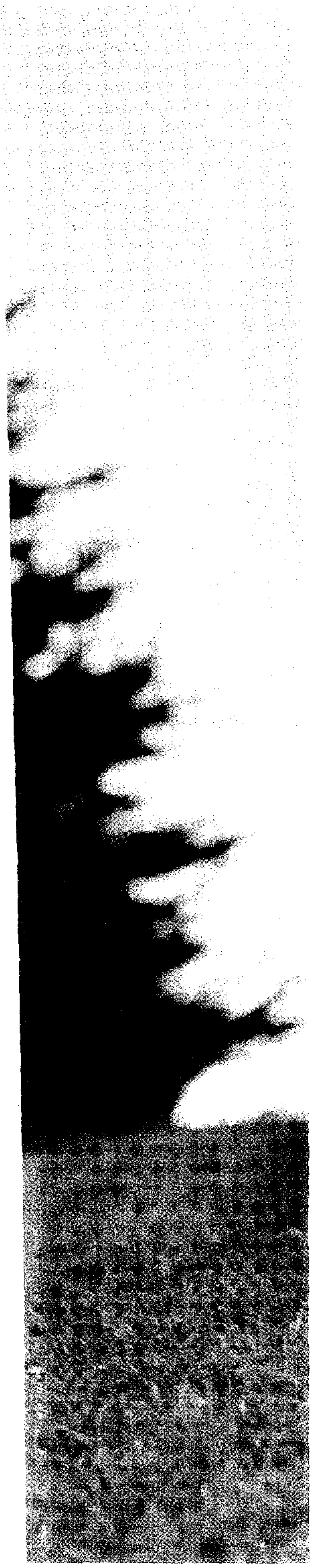
YUMI HEO

If anyone had suggested that I would soon be enjoying a movie about fluffy little goose chicks, I would have told him just where he could stuff them and, more to the point, what he could stuff them with. Apple and chestnuts are nice. But Carroll Ballard's "Fly Away Home" is an odd and resonant picture—charming, as you might expect from the director of "The Black Stallion," although what is most impressive about both movies is their refusal to get by on charm alone. The cuteness rating of "Fly Away Home" is at its lowest in the opening scenes, which feel thundery with grief. The credits roll over a nocturnal car crash in New Zealand, in which thirteen-year-old Amy Alden (Anna Paquin) loses her much loved mother. Amy is left in the care of her estranged and much mistrusted father, Thomas (Jeff Daniels), who takes her to his home in Ontario. She barely remembers Thomas—and she certainly doesn't think much of him, or of his girlfriend, Susan (Dana Delany), or of his brother, her goofy Uncle David (Terry Kinney). Amy doesn't care for anything, in fact, until she finds a clutch of Canada-goose eggs, left behind by the wrecking crews of local developers. Gathering up the eggs, Amy hatches a plan.

In the normal run of events, when I'm faced with any film that sets nature against commerce I know where I stand. I take the name of the evil company concerned and try to buy shares in it immediately after the screening, as a principled protest against sanctimonious moviemaking. But I was thrown by "Fly Away Home," which casts a quick eye over the morality of the situation and hurries on. For one thing, the characters are far too angular and obsessional to be bothered with pathos; Amy, in particular, rescues the eggs not through an excess of eco-smugness but because she's alone with her grief and needs something to do. There's a trace of the comatose running through these early scenes; we keep seeing Amy curled up asleep—in the barn, in the bath, wherever—as if she were still stunned by slow-burning shock. The chicks share the bath with her, so I guess we're supposed to find the whole thing cute, but as they pecked at her slumbering form I began



SHOWCASE BY VALERIE SHAFF *Aloft goes Carlo, a California broken-coated Jack Russell, in all-out terrier exuberance—and why not, when a passing ball (or bug or Frisbee) demands instantaneous attention? Score it a nine. The dashing portrait is from Ms. Shaff's current show, "Animal Magnetism," at the Bridgewater/Lustberg Gallery, in SoHo.*



to get serious Tippi Hedren flashbacks.

Paquin's performance, especially in the first half of this picture, is about as sentimental as broken glass; any suspicions that the fierce, unbowed Flora of "The Piano" was a weird one-off and that Paquin might be stranded without the tutelage of Jane Campion are banished within minutes of the new movie. Amy has a bad and bridling temper but is never merely at its mercy; her determination, whether to raise the orphaned birds or to repel her father's first attempts at affection, goes way beyond childishness. Even in "The Piano," Paquin seemed disturbingly old for her age, already wise to the shortcomings of innocence, and "Fly Away Home" pushes the process further: it makes you realize that, for all the hundreds of kids who throng Hollywood movies, most of them ripe for a slap on the ear, there are few really good films about puberty; its cussed, wavering, unfinished quality is too tricky to handle. Cinema relies on settled and controllable looks, but Paquin is at the stage where plainness can switch to grace, and back again, with a change in the light; she may yet become a great screen beauty, but it's much more interesting to watch her while the matter is undecided. Amy was a child in her mother's car, but when her father sees her in the shower her soapy rage and nakedness are a ringing announcement that adult life is in sight.

Thomas, meanwhile, is drifting in the opposite direction; he's an inventor by trade, and his fidgety enthusiasms verge on the infantile. This marks a startling redirection for Jeff Daniels; I have always admired him as a light leading man, the obvious choice for what you might call Joel McCrea roles, but "Fly Away Home" asks for extra sadness and gets it, plus a mane of roaring hair. Soon after her arrival, Amy wakes up, runs outside, and sees him launching himself off a hillside in a homemade flying machine, which glides almost as easily as it crash-lands. She storms back into the house, and you can see why; one parent has been smashed to death, and now the other is risking the same fate. At this point, Thomas's frail constructions have the look of a sideshow, a crazy hobby at the edge of the main story; gradually, they assume center stage. Far from curbing Amy's passion for the flock, he encourages it. He even proposes, in the way that a normal person would suggest a trip to the grocery store, that he build a motorized glider to stand in for a parent goose, train the birds to follow it, and finally lead them down to a wintering ground in the South. This is notably nutty to begin with, and hard to improve on, but Thomas swiftly plays his ace by inviting Amy along for the ride and teaching her to fly her own machine. And how will he be financing the flight? By selling the homemade lunar-landing module sitting in his barn, of course. Silly question.

"Fly Away Home" represents, among other things, a considerable triumph of the nerds. Thomas ("I'm used to my ideas not working out") and his brother ("Math can be really fun") are awkward souls who surmount their bafflement at life with sheer, stubborn enthusiasm. Teaching geese to migrate is a ridiculous idea if you stop to think about it, but Thomas's prime virtue is that he never stops—he's forever upgrading his plans to meet the next obstruction, or simply swatting it aside. The first point of contact between father and daughter comes when a wildlife officer tries to clip the goslings' wings. Amy explodes, whacking the poor guy over the head; it's the first ugly movement we've seen since the car crash, and Thomas joins the fray, hounding the officer from the house. One of the reasons that Ballard's movie, though inoffensive, ends up neither soft nor corny is that the narrative keeps getting interrupted by gestures toward violence and disaster. When Amy's plane hits the ground more robustly than she intended, Thomas hares over to the wreckage and, on finding her alive, bursts into tears. "You're crying," she says with stern curiosity, as if remarking on a freak weather condition. Later, during the migration, he has a tailspin of his own, but Amy has no time to hang around as a ministering angel: she has a mission to complete. Ballard proceeds, in short, on the principle that love is best expressed in action; on the rare occasions when he falls short of that ideal—when Susan explains to Amy, for instance, that she can never take the place of Amy's dead mother—you can hear the clunk from the back row.

Once the final journey is under way, the film grows both lovelier and flatter. There's nothing much left to happen, barring the odd wrong turning over a major city, and the plot is quietly replaced by a kind of orderly lyricism. Ballard and his cinematographer, Caleb Deschanel,

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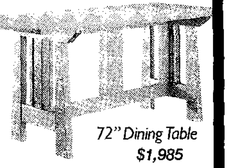
dream up a succession of clear, frictionless aerial shots; during the final approach, Amy's aircraft meets its mirror image in a stretch of still water. The plane is a buzzy little number, shaped and painted like a goose, and the birds obediently throng around in formation: talk about in-flight entertainment. Whether they are following Amy's lead or she is ascending to their level is impossible to work out; there's something elusive, indeed, about the symbolic value of the entire movie. Its true subject is goose behavior, not the displacement of unhappiness, but you nevertheless catch a definite sense of the characters' need to rise above death and its detritus; besides, how can you not respect a work that takes you to the core of a family without ever stooping to family values? Maybe one shouldn't read too much into "Fly Away Home"—it is primarily a kids' picture, after all. But that has suddenly become a highly respectable genre. At the end of a year when so many major movies have been aimed at the pickled brains of teen-agers, I would rather see "A Little Princess" or "James and the Giant Peach"—or "Fly Away Home"—than sit through "Independence Day" again. And Carroll Ballard's proven gift for the suggestive, for easy magic, has such allure that you can ponder his movies all you like without destroying their delicate sensation of fable: Anna Paquin is Mother Goose, and "Fly Away Home" is her rhyme.

"AMERICAN BUFFALO" is the movie version of David Mamet's play, but only just. Mamet himself adapted the work for the screen; the direction is by Michael Corrente, who seems not so much in charge of his material as deeply in awe of it. There's something cramped and stagestruck about the film, as there was about James Foley's attempt at "Glengarry Glen Ross"; in both cases, I came out of the cinema in need of fresh air. Mamet fans will contend that claustrophobia is part of the deal, that his best lines are meant to coil round your throat—but think of the wonderful job that Louis Malle did with Mamet's adaptation of Chekhov in "Vanya on 42nd Street," or of the urgent and underrated "Homicide," directed by Mamet himself, and you realize that his fascination with verbal pressures is quite capable of driving a movie onward instead of grinding it down.

The set for Corrente's "American Buffalo" looks like a set, not like a place at all: a resale shop so cluttered and fusty that even the light has turned brown. At the back, there's an open staircase, which should make theatre lovers feel at home, and at the front desk is Dennis Franz, which should make "NYPD Blue" watchers swoon. He plays Donny, dealer in junk and friend to Teach (Dustin Hoffman), who has long since convinced himself that the entire world is junk. "I don't know," he muses, rambling from one thought to the next. "Fucking day . . . fucking weather." He orders some bacon. "How's your bacon?" Donny asks. "Oh, they always fuck it up," Teach says. Imagine Chekhov with a dirty mouth and you'll get a feel for the sullied, comic weariness of Teach. I found myself moved by this polemical nothingness, and Hoffman gives it everything; you stare at his face, so richly shamed and shadowed that it looks as if he beat himself up every night, and you wonder whether perhaps Ratso didn't die on the bus at the end of "Midnight Cowboy"—whether he pulled through, and wound up twenty years later in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

The plot is unexpectedly Jamesian: the impassioned contemplation of something that doesn't happen. Donny is planning a robbery, and employing the young Bobby (Sean Nelson) to help him out, but Teach wants to come along instead, as if loath to miss out on activity of any description. This loser's lust for power, and a natural paranoia about everyone else's motives, pulls Teach toward a moment of climactic fury. The scene is like a punch in the mouth, but for some reason the hurt doesn't linger; Corrente has composed his picture largely in closeups, and the result is that we focus on the beat of Mamet's script to the exclusion of almost everything else. "American Buffalo" should be a hair-raising skirmish between stragglers—between wounded souls who believe themselves to be on the mend, even on the make—but Corrente offers us little more than a ringside seat at a rhetorical prizefight. The action is devoid of anything except the three principals and their conversations; the sight of Franz padding heavily down the street at the beginning of the story, turning up his collar against a cold dawn, promises a broader melancholy that never comes. "American Buffalo" is sour and sinister, all right, but it's punching above its weight. ♦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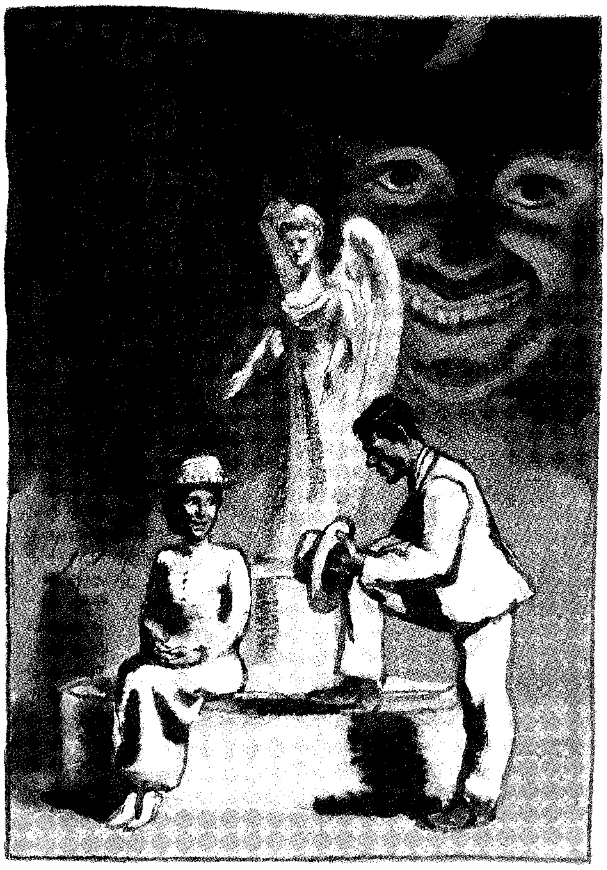
THE THEATRE

HEAVEN CAN WAIT

Tennessee Williams's farewell to propriety.

BY JOHN LAHR

"I HAVE such a divided nature!" Tennessee Williams once said. "Irreconcilably divided." Williams's plays, the most autobiographical in American drama, serve as a contour map of his shifting inner landscape. "Summer and Smoke," which is being given an uneven but compelling revival at the Roundabout, was written between 1945 and 1948, in the first flowering of his theatrical genius, and was originally titled "Chart of Anatomy"; it is really an anatomy of the spiritual war in Williams. In this tale of the unrequited love of the prim, pure Alma Winemiller (Mary McDonnell) for the louche doctor John Buchanan (Harry Hamlin), Williams couches the metaphysical struggle between the Christian sense of self, which he'd absorbed during his Southern Episcopalian upbringing, and his romantic sense of self, whose emergence he'd first announced in "The Glass Menagerie" (1945) and mythologized in his masterpiece, "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947). The fragile, dutiful Alma, who has lived her life under wraps, says she has "another person inside me, another self." She, like Williams, was raised in a rectory, and, like him, is bedevilled by panic attacks that signal the "warring elements" in her repressed nature. In a schematic progression of cinematic scenes (which in early drafts were intended to be accompanied by silent-film footage), Williams invents for Alma a journey that parallels his own romantic enthusiasm for the primitive: she unlearns propriety and embraces instinct. The name Alma, we are told, means "soul," and it is the transformation of the soul to which the play bears fascinating witness: a process that begins with sacrificing the self to God and ends with making a god of the self.


Mary McDonnell and Harry Hamlin in "Summer and Smoke," an otherworldly tale of unrequited love.

JAMES MCMULLAN

This deliberate regression is acted out in a very particular allegorical setting, which Williams was at pains to elaborate in two pages of stage directions. The stage is bounded by a vast azure sky (meant to evoke the promise of Heaven) and a town fountain with a "gracefully crouching" and "brooding" stone angel, whose hands "form a cup from which water flows" (water being a traditional Christian symbol of the spirit). Derek McLane's set, like much else in the production, is effective without being accurate. Here the sky and the angel have been stripped of much of their iconographic power: the angel, which neither crouches nor broods, is empty-handed, and cumulus clouds mottle the "pure and intense blue" horizon on which Williams adamantly insisted. The scudding clouds are also projected onto the stage floor, which does succeed in putting the sexual turmoil of the play into an apt otherworldly framework. To Williams's religious scheme McLane has added his own secular, derivative touches: models of the Southern town's Federal architecture dangle like heavenly birdhouses in the sky as the audience takes its seats, only to vanish when the play begins.

David Warren's slick production gets off to an uncertain start in the prologue, where, as youngsters, Alma and John establish the spiritual contrasts between them that will be fleshed out when they are adults. As the pint-size auguries of angst, Nathalie Paulding and Chad Aaron are lumbered with the task of being both Southern and clear; they manage only to be mostly inaudible. The physical boldness that defines the adult John Buchanan—the stage directions mention his "demoniac unrest"—is nowhere foreshadowed in Young John, who is as scrubbed and stiff as a Saks mannequin but is supposed to be a little "devil." (To show the boy's swagger, Warren misguidedly gives the lad a ball to bounce; it only makes him more contained and tentative.) Young Alma, who is "Miss Priss," takes Young John's hand and makes him feel the nearly rubbed-out word at the base of the fountain. The word is "eternity," and it gives Alma "cold shivers." But Young John, whose mother has died, and who tells Alma how he "screamed and hit her" on her deathbed, brays at the notion of life after death. John's fear of death sets him on the reckless path of pleasure; Alma's fear of life sets her on the righteous path to self-sacrifice.

"Right now the work strikes me as an unhappy cross between Dr. Faustus and a radio soap-opera," Williams wrote to his agent Audrey Wood in 1946, assessing an early draft of "Summer and Smoke." In less subtle hands, the symmetry of the characters and the pat emotional reversals that begin and end each scene would reduce "Summer and Smoke" to mere melodrama. Williams wanted to create "a sort of Gothic quality—spiritually romantic," although, even at the time, he had to acknowledge that it was "hard . . . to use such stuff in a modern play for a modern audience." But his gift for character and his ruthless fix on his own spiritual quandary give the play an interior dramatic life that he knew didn't come across on the page. "I always believed it was a play that could live in production (though utterly dead on paper)," he wrote to his friend Donald Windham in 1948, after the play's tepid Broadway début.

In the Roundabout revival, Mary McDonnell brings Alma thoroughly to life. She radiates decency and intelligence, and convincingly manages Alma's nervousness and the punishing slow burn of desire. Warren and his costume designer, Martin Pakledinaz, have jazzed her up so that the demure woman we first meet in an elegant ivory suit and hat sitting by the fountain hardly seems "prematurely spinsterish," as Williams indicates, and McDonnell, who has a twinkle in her eye and a strapping centeredness, is actually slightly miscast; but she gives such good value in interpreting Alma that the audience suspends disbelief. As for John, Harry Hamlin's energy may not be cut to the "Promethean" size that Williams called for, but he's handsome, charming, and bubbling with testosterone. You can imagine Hamlin at a cockfight or an orgy, or on a bender—the kind of wanton pursuits John indulges in until his father (James Pritchett) walks in on one of his debauches and is shot—an episode that finally leads to John's redemption "with good works." (He completes his father's medical research and "stamps out the fever" both in the world and in himself.) It also leads, ironically, to his acceding to Miss Alma's point of view, just as she comes around to his. Up to this point, in Act II, Alma is scathing on the subject of John's pursuit of "self-satisfaction," sounding much the same romantic warning that Blanche delivers to Stella about Stanley Kowalski: "Don't hang back with the brutes!" Hamlin and McDonnell have a tender, appealing rapport, and nowhere is it more moving than when Alma confesses her own change of heart. "The girl who said 'no,' she doesn't exist anymore . . . suffocated in the smoke from something on fire inside her," Alma says, finally making a pass at John after refusing him in the past. In what is perhaps McDonnell's best-judged and most heartbreaking speech, Alma continues, "She said, 'Forget about pride whenever it stands between you and what you must have!' " But John is to marry Alma's former student Nellie (the rambunctious Hayley Sparks, making a vivacious Broadway début); Alma must take the path of self-aggrandizement alone.

In a few scenes prior to the finale, Williams hastily sketches the erosion of Alma's old ways: she is no longer the attentive daughter to her demented, round-shouldered mother (the superb Roberta Maxwell); she gives up her job as a voice teacher; she sits around the house during the day and takes late-night walks. "Tell them I've changed," she says to her severe father (Ken Jenkins) when he asks what he's supposed to tell their friends about her eccentric behavior. "And you're waiting to see in what way." The audience sees in just what way in the final scene at the fountain, when Alma picks up a travelling salesman, who talks about being lonely on the road. "All rooms are lonely where there is only one person," she replies, in a Williams line that hits like a punch to the heart. She offers him one of the tranquillizers that John has given her to calm her nerves. "You'll be surprised how infinitely merciful they are," she says. "The prescription number is 96814. I think of it as the telephone number of God." So God and his mercies are now perceived to be in this world, not the next; and the hope of transcendence is in the romantic re-creation of the self through submersion in the unconscious and the ungovernable. Alma sets off for Moon Lake Casino, "where anything goes" and "all kinds of after-dark entertainment" are on offer. As she leaves, she pauses to give what Williams calls "a sort of valedictory salute" to the stone angel. The gesture is crucial and emblematic: it is both her and Williams's farewell to their Christian past. Alma turns her back on the angel and exits toward her new, carnal heaven "with her hand still raised in a gesture of wonder and finality.” But in this performance, astonishingly, the gesture is omitted. Instead, McDonnell gives the statue a dry wash, eying it from head to toe before ambling unsteadily offstage.

The omission is serious; Warren has mounted the play but has not really understood it. The lapse doesn’t spoil the audience’s pleasure—just the play’s meaning. In Williams’s vision, Alma’s undoing of her own development is a blessing—the same romantic abdication that would be the springboard for the next thirty years of his life and work. Onstage, it’s a recipe for memorable drama; in life, it’s a recipe for disaster. By the end of the sixties, a decade Williams referred to as “the Stoned Age,” he was an exhausted and drugged-out shadow of himself: he was betrayed by his romantic imagination. Over the decades, his life and his beautiful plays measured the sad, inevitable trajectory from blessing to barbarity.

“Old Wicked Songs,” at the Promenade, is a well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony, with one hand on its heart and the other on the public purse. The play, by Jon Marans, asks the question, Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old piano prodigy find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher who survived the Holocaust? Between talk of “Dichterliebe” and Dachau, they swap attitude and exposition; ultimately, they save each other’s lives. The evening is carried on the cool command of Justin Kirk, who plays Stephen Hoffman, the enfant-not-so-terrible, and owns the stage with his swaggering, rebarbative style. Hal Robinson, as the wily coach, hangs in there, too, but sometimes the dialogue and his dialect let him down. The literate play, which is unobtrusively directed by Seth Barrish, is crafted to a recognizable commercial formula, in which each new scene quickly reverses the expectations of the previous one. (Mr. Marans did time as a script editor for Columbia Pictures.) What the play can’t reverse is its chronic glibness. The characters neatly go through changes, but the audience isn’t changed—it arrives at the station long before the engine of the plot reaches its destination. Perhaps this is why, despite my indigestion, theatregoers on the night I saw the play ate it up. Nobody ever went broke playing soft-pitch with the American public: look for “Old Wicked Songs” soon at the multiplex near you. ♦

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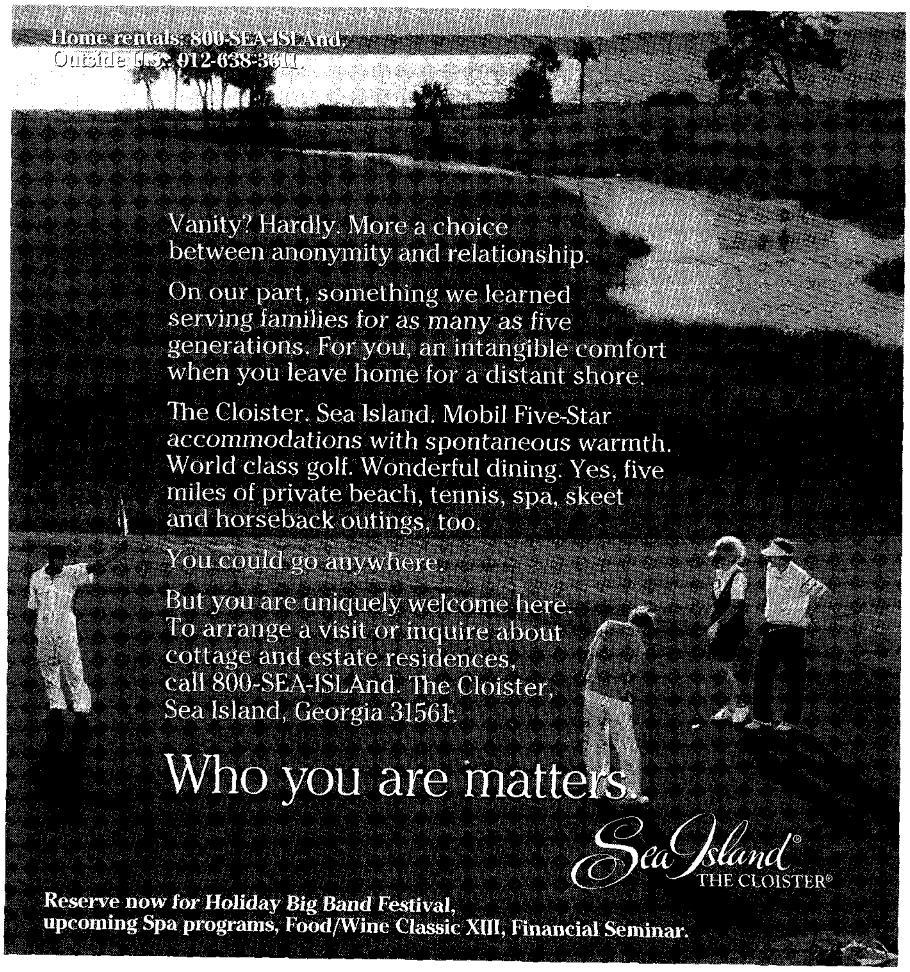

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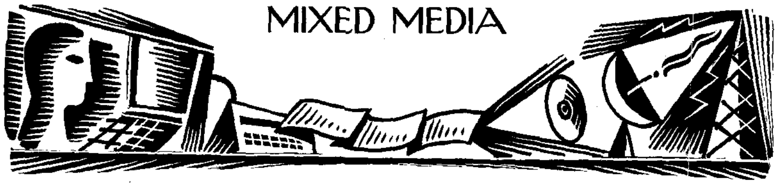


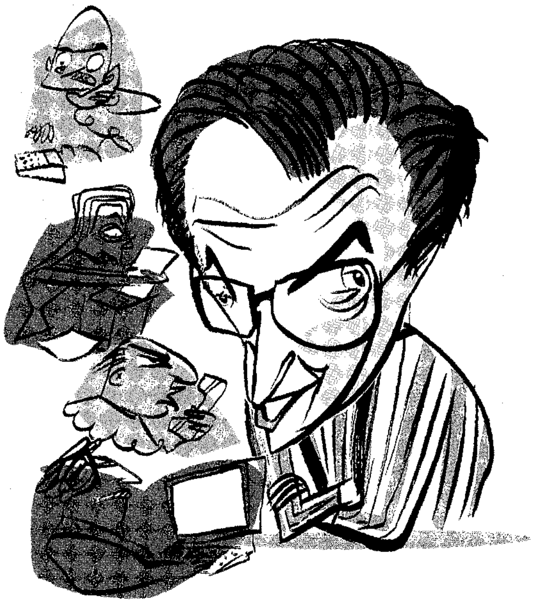
ONLY DISCONNECT

Of cranky callers, instant polling, and MSNBC's new old-fashioned news.

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

IN the old days, it was called audience participation. Today, it's called interactivity. Whatever the buzz phrase, the concept remains the same—to interrupt the one-way flow of media traffic and invite the viewer to become "part of the program," as CNN's Larry King likes to say. Interactivity flings the airwaves open to the great, throbbing passions of the citizen-viewer and promotes active involvement rather than passive consumption—i.e., it should remove some of the glaze from America's eyeballs. Nice idea, but in practice it almost never works. I've seldom seen a talk show where taking phone calls provided extra bounce or illumination. Let any average schmo get through to any movie star appearing with Larry King or Tom Snyder, and the first question invariably is: "Of all the films you've made, which one is your favorite?" (Followed by: "What advice would you give someone just starting out in the business?") The callers lob the same golly-gee questions the hosts do. They're the autograph hounds of the airwaves.

The political arena proves no more uplifting. Each day, C-SPAN broadcasts a perusal of the morning papers with elected officials, journalists, and policy wonks. It's usually a very well-informed, civilized, even-keel discussion (the hosts on C-SPAN are *saints*)—until they go to open phones. You might think that a network this thoroughly rooted in Jeffersonian ideals would draw from the deep end of the I.Q. pool. But no; it's like prying open the lid on the national id. Rush Limbaugh dittoheads, drawling male loners who sound as though they have a crick in their brains, conspiracy theorists, crusty old crackpots (like the recent retiree who grumbled, "Every morning at seven o'clock, all I see is the Clinton Commies"): C-SPAN's newspaper roundup attracts the latest specimens of what Richard Hofstadter has called the anti-intellectual tradition in America. (The few liberals who phone often whimper like Beavis and Butt-head's hippie-dippy teacher, but at least their remarks seem relatively sane.) Many of the callers boast about not being beholden to any party, taking a plague-on-both-their-houses position (they ain't fooled by them politicians), and the C-SPAN panelists never challenge their intellectual pride. If anything, these callers are coddled. As Walker Percy wrote, it's O.K. to attack greedy crooks or bleeding-heart liberals, "but don't lay a finger on the voter, especially not the independent voter who despises politics and breaks away from his TV once every four years to vote for a man—because he looks sincere on TV. It is this very flattery which the Federalist authors warned against." People: the weak link in democracy.



Larry's the King of viewer call-ins, but is interactive TV a kingdom worth ruling?

TOM BACHTELL

Interactivity isn't confined to the telephone. It now includes faxes (the faxes on

C-SPAN are crankier than the calls), E-mail, and instant polls, which contradict each other depending on how they're worded and thus yield what one Internet critic has called "statistical non sequiturs." (Comedy Central's "Politically Incorrect" kids the process by conducting mock polls on such hot-button topics as which rock singer has the biggest lips.) No network has made all modes of interactivity more integral to its programming identity than the new cable network MSNBC, a marriage of Microsoft and NBC. With its promotional tag line "It's time to get connected," MSNBC heralds itself as the boldest link so far between on-line and on-air; it has synergy coming out of its ears. The newsroom at MSNBC, with its faux-brick walls and active clutter of monitors, control boards, and map-size screens displaying enlargements of electronic circuitry, resembles a cross between a hip ad agency and the command station at NORAD. On a TV monitor behind an anchorperson marches a binary stream of ones and zeros.

Like CNN, MSNBC boasts its own Web site ("Send us your opinions about current events, and we may publish them!"), but it has made a more ambitious and adventurous effort to court the keyboard surfers of the MTV generation. Each week night, it broadcasts a show devoted solely to the Internet called "The Site," hosted by Soledad O'Brien, who bops around a set conceived as a space-age coffeehouse: "Star Wars" meets Starbucks. The coffeehouse even has its own groovy virtual-reality counter guy with purple pineapple hair: he lays his own special kind of love vibes on Soledad. Along with serious news updates ("Here are some of today's headlines from the digital domain"), "The Site" features a nightly tour of nifty Web sites, which presents the opportunity to stare at your TV screen and observe other people staring at other screens—the latest in vicarious nonliving. For a more skeptical, holistic perspective, there's regular commentary from Cliff Stoll, the author of a free-swinging book about cyberspace and cyberhype called "Silicon Snake Oil." His segments, shot like home movies, are intended to be a low-tech subversion of a high-tech format; with an absent-minded-professor befuddlement, he wanders the grounds of his house in Oakland, California, and feigns that he's musing at random. One recent installment had him picking a plum from a back-yard tree and meditat-

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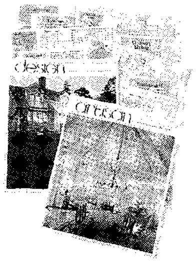

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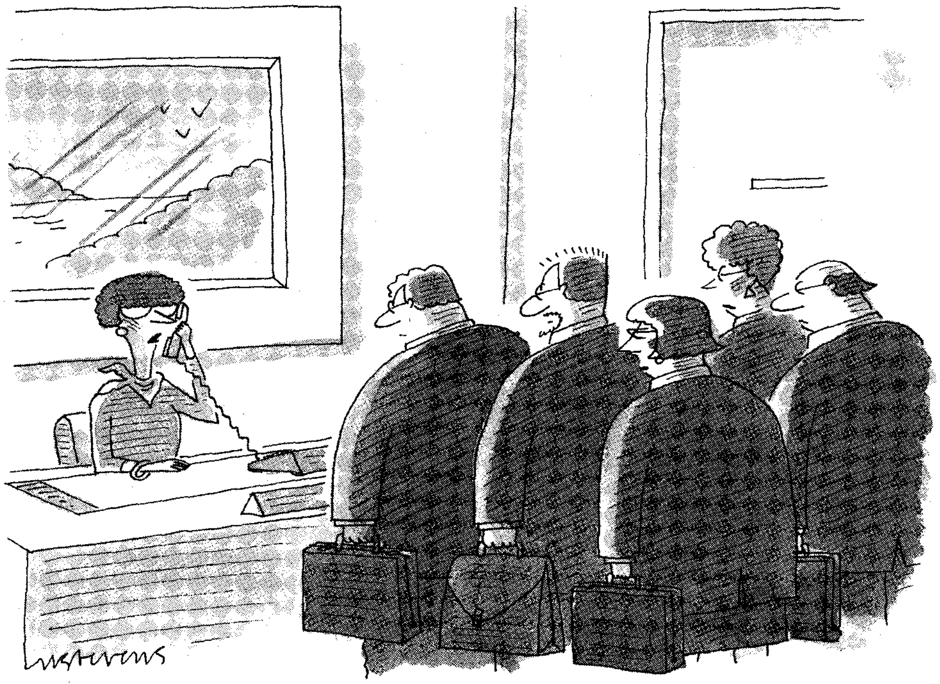


"A pod of attorneys to see you, sir!"

• •

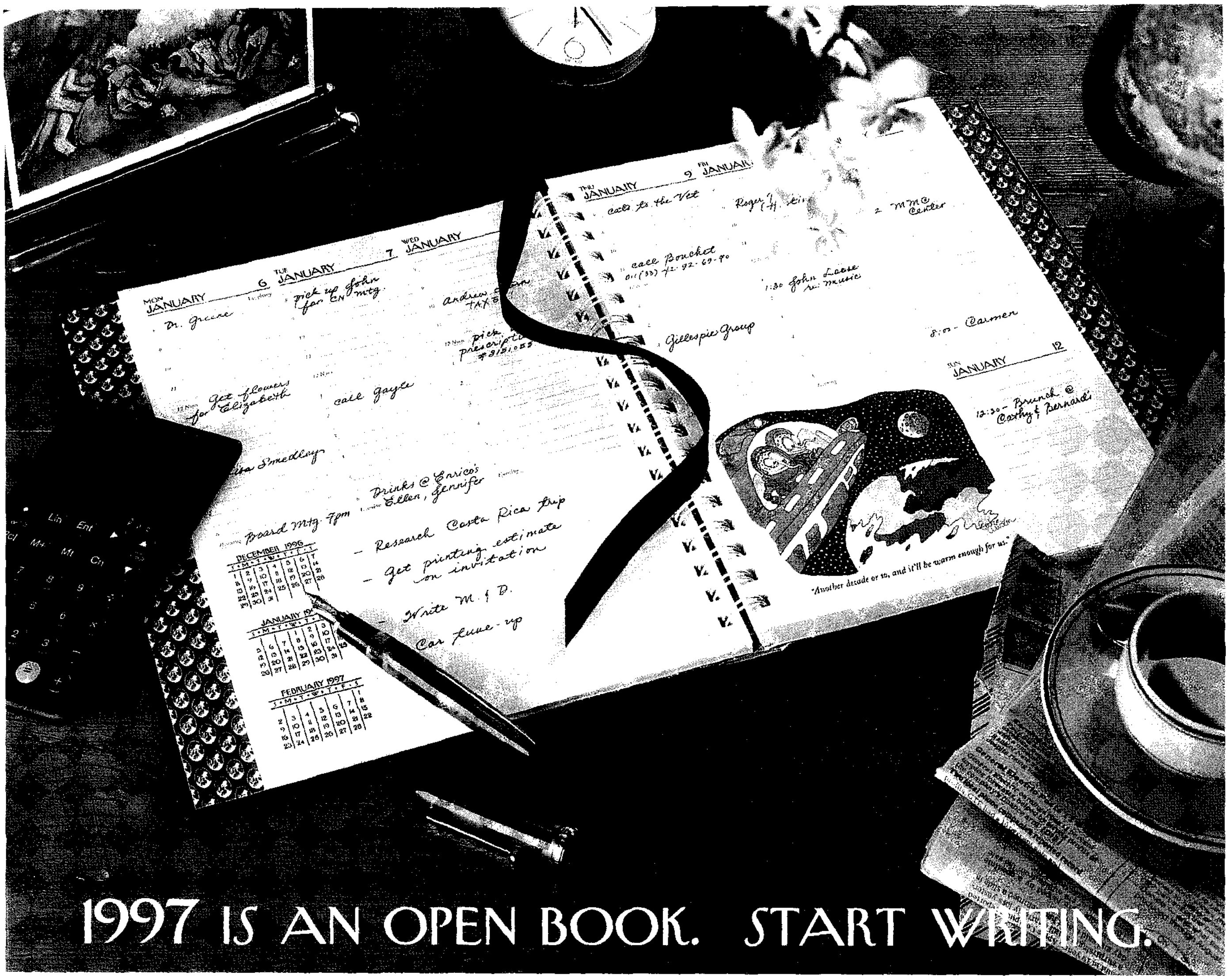
ing on homemade jam. After a ramble about the value of a personalized gift versus an impersonal computer-generated message, he concluded, "Rather than seeing a real cool graphic on your World Wide Web page, I'd rather send and receive a jar of homemade plum jam." Go back inside, Cliff.

The irony is that what's dynamic about MSNBC has little to do with interactivity (though "The Site" is an entertaining try) and more to do with old-fashioned journalistic enterprise. The network outpaced CNN at the outset, with its coverage of the T.W.A. crash, and has continued to be more flexible than its all-news rival—less locked into its programming blocks. MSNBC excels at live cutaways to events like Bob Dole's "Hollywood II" speech or Mike McCurry's press conference announcing Dick Morris's resignation. The coverage doesn't seem canned. Adding lustre and authority is a nightly lineup starring NBC-news bigfoots like Jane Pauley, Tom Brokaw, Bryant Gumbel, Bob Costas, and Katie Couric, who are able to conduct interviews at a length impossible on their parent network. Couric has shown the sharpest zip. Pundits who were surprised at her ruffling of Bob Dole over his stand on tobacco (which cost the "Today" show a booking when Elizabeth Dole refused to make a return engagement) shouldn't have been: smiling and relentless, Couric has become the killer rabbit of TV interviewers. On MSNBC's "InterNight," she performed the best grilling I've seen of the former political strategist Ed Rollins, at one point asking him, "When it comes to Michael Huffington, you basically say there was no 'there' there. If there was no 'there' there, why were you there?" (His lame reply: "That's a complicated question. . . .") When Rollins lamented the rise of negative campaigning, she told him to quit acting so "pure"—he had done more than his share of it. Couric's unflinching eye contact is far more squirm-inducing than Robert Novak's dripping sarcasms or John Sununu's McCarthyite barking on CNN's "Crossfire." They ham up their high dudgeon and engage in melodrama, which allows their adversaries to become equally bombastic. She keeps it clinical.

Bench strength is provided by the second-tier NBC talents who host the news hours, including Ann Curry and Brian Williams (Chuck Scarborough with a serrated edge); and by the dry, ironical John Gibson, who has become the station's Mr. Sardonicus. MSNBC has also hired personalities from other networks, allowing them to display unaccustomed grit—most noticeably Bill Moyers, who has shed the moss he's accumulated from years of pondering the imponderables of God and virtue on PBS, and has returned to his political roots (he was Lyndon Johnson's press secretary), refereeing bull sessions on "InterNight" with newfound pith and assurance. He's stopped all that empathizing.

On September 3rd, the network unveiled its gutsiest programming ploy: a live video simulcast of Don Imus's morning radio show. Imus has been simulcast before, on C-SPAN, where his song parodies, rude speculations, and sheer cussedness clashed with the network's civic-minded ethos. Here his personality cult should be more at home, though the very idea of televising a radio show seems iffy. Visually, it's just a bunch of guys with headsets sitting in glass booths. It's one thing to listen to Imus—to the low rumble of trouble slowly erupting from his throat as Rabelaisian put-down (calling the President a "pant-load")—and quite another to *see* him first thing in the morning. I look at Imus and I can't help thinking of that line in Ring Lardner about giving the wolf a sitz bath. (I say that with love, I do.) But there's no question that for a frank, funny-profane scroll of political news no one cuts to the quick better than Imus, whether he's sparring with the columnist Mike Barnicle, of the Boston *Globe*, or indulging in one of his incendiary rants.

It's too soon to judge how Imus will fare, since his début was cut short by President Clinton's statement on the missile attack on Iraq. Yet even a truncated show gave Imus time to rag MSNBC, suggesting that it hire "snappier babes" and "get rid of John Gibson," who "looks creepy"; tease Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" over the "hatchet job" his colleague Lesley Stahl tried to do on Bob Dole; and interrupt a news item with a tantrum over the cold, horrible coffee he was being served. The unique quality of Imus's show is that it books not only slick media pros, like Mike Wallace, Tim Russert, and Jeff Greenfield, but idiosyncratic free-associators whose careers have been in and out of eclipse, such as Mort Sahl and Dick Cavett. (Imus, whose career has taken its own shadowy dips, has an affinity with those who come through the other side of fame.) When Imus and his guests gibe and go at each other, his show doesn't need input from the outside. Taking calls or faxes would only mess up the flow, like interrupting a jam session to let an amateur play a few bars. And I suspect that as MSNBC evolves the network will quietly deactivate its interactive formula, let its anchors do their stuff, and leave the hoi polloi to Larry King. ♦



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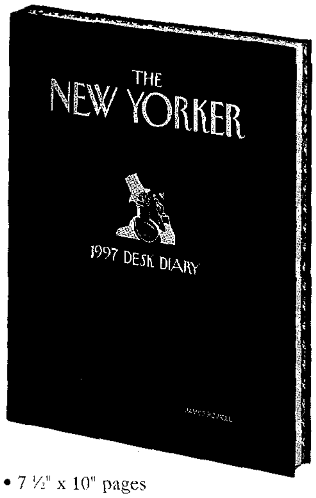

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RETURN OF THE CLICHÉ EXPERT

BY ROGER ANGELL

Q: Good morning, Mr. Arbuthnot. It's a pleasure to see you again, and to hear further testimony from you on the subject of clichés.

A: Wrong man. You're thinking of my uncle, Dr. Magnus Arbuthnot, who is no longer with us. Bought the farm, checked out, fumed out, popped off, slipped his cable, went over the pass, hit the throughway. I mean, he's gone-zo. I'm Chip Arbuthnot, his heir. His *spiritual* heir.

Q: But you are here to give us your views on current and established clichés, are you not?

A: No way.

Q: You're not?

A: I'm here to share my views.

Q: I see. And you are an expert in the field, are you not?

A: Arguably.

Q: You wish to argue with the court?

A: No, I'm arguably an expert. The adverb allows me to say something and then partly take it back.

Q: I think I understand.

A: Don't worry about it. This stuff isn't written in stone.

Q: You're very kind.

A: There's a reason for that.

Q: I can almost guess what it is. It's on the tip of my tongue.

A: I'm a people person.

Q: I knew it! Now, Mr. Arbuthnot, may I ask a strange question? What's that on your head?

A: This is my other hat.

Q: Your *other* hat?

A: This is the hat I wear when I'm being the cliché expert. When I'm doing something else, I wear a different other hat, not this one.

Q: Hmm. Are you telling us that being a cliché expert is not a full-time occupation?

A: As if. Get a grip.

Q: You must be a busy man, holding so many demanding jobs.

A: None of this is rocket science. But, yes, my plate is full.

Q: And you must have to maintain a constant schedule of travels to different parts of the country, if not the world, to keep up with regional as well as occupational clichés, is that not the case?

A: Been there, done that.

Q: Tell me, do most people know when they're speaking in clichés? Or is that a dumb question?

A: I'm not comfortable with it. If I said it was a no-brainer, I'd be sending the wrong message. Let's say that some folks who think they're pushing the envelope conversationwise ain't.

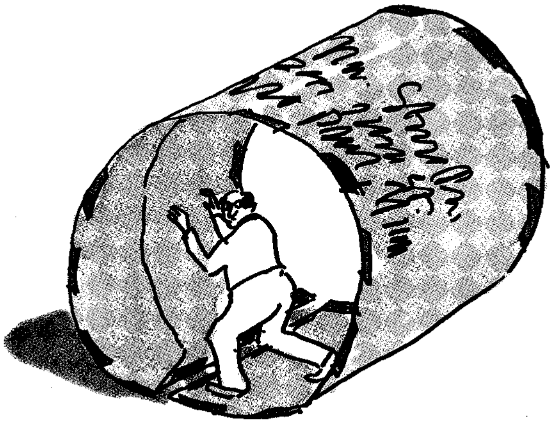
Q: Mr. Arbuthnot, are there specific occupations that produce a greater preponderance of clichés in daily human intercourse than others do?

A: "Daily human intercourse" is very fine. Congratulations.

Q: Shall I repeat the question?

A: No, because I'm going to pass. This is a slippery slope.

Q: What about the sexes? Are women more likely than men to—



A: Whoa. Back off, Mister. Don't go there. It's a no-win situation.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry.

A: You're putting me between a rock and a hard place.

Q: I didn't mean to upset you. I apologize.

A: You mean you empathize.

Q: That's what I meant to say.

A: You feel my pain.

Q: Yes, I do, I do!

A: Historically, you have concerns.

Q: That's right!

A: Unless I miss my guess, you're also pro-active.

Q: Yup.

A: At the same time, you're a very private person.

Q: Absolutely. How did you know?

A: Trust me, it's easy. All you have to do is listen to your inner child.

Q: So any of us can become a cliché expert—is that what you're saying?

A: How did we end up here? Hello?

Q: Oop, I'm going too fast again, aren't I? Just *using* clichés doesn't do the trick—is that right?

A: No. You have to talk the talk and walk the walk.

Q: But of course. I wish we could go on with this and perhaps find out how you got to ask all the questions, instead of the court. But our time is up. I hope you've enjoyed our little meeting.

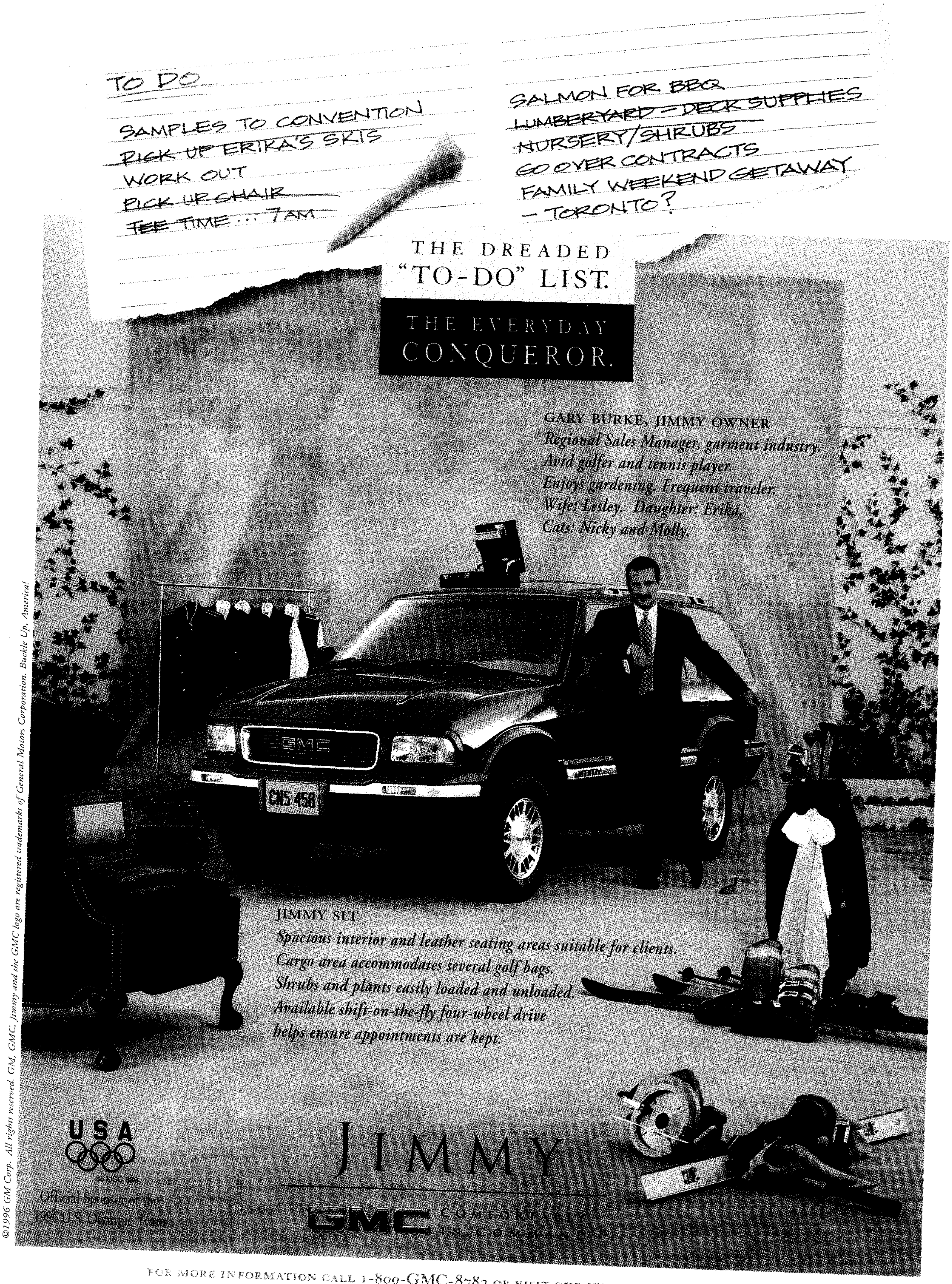
A: You've made my day.

Q: You have enlightened us all.

A: It doesn't get any better than this.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Arbuthnot.

A: No problema. ♦



TO DO
SAMPLES TO CONVENTION
~~PICK UP ERIKA'S SKIS~~
WORK OUT
~~PICK UP CHAIR~~
~~TEE TIME ... 7AM~~
SALMON FOR BBQ
~~LUMBERYARD – DECK SUPPLIES~~
~~NURSERY/SHRUBS~~
GO OVER CONTRACTS
FAMILY WEEKEND GETAWAY
– TORONTO?
CNS 458
USA
36 USC 380

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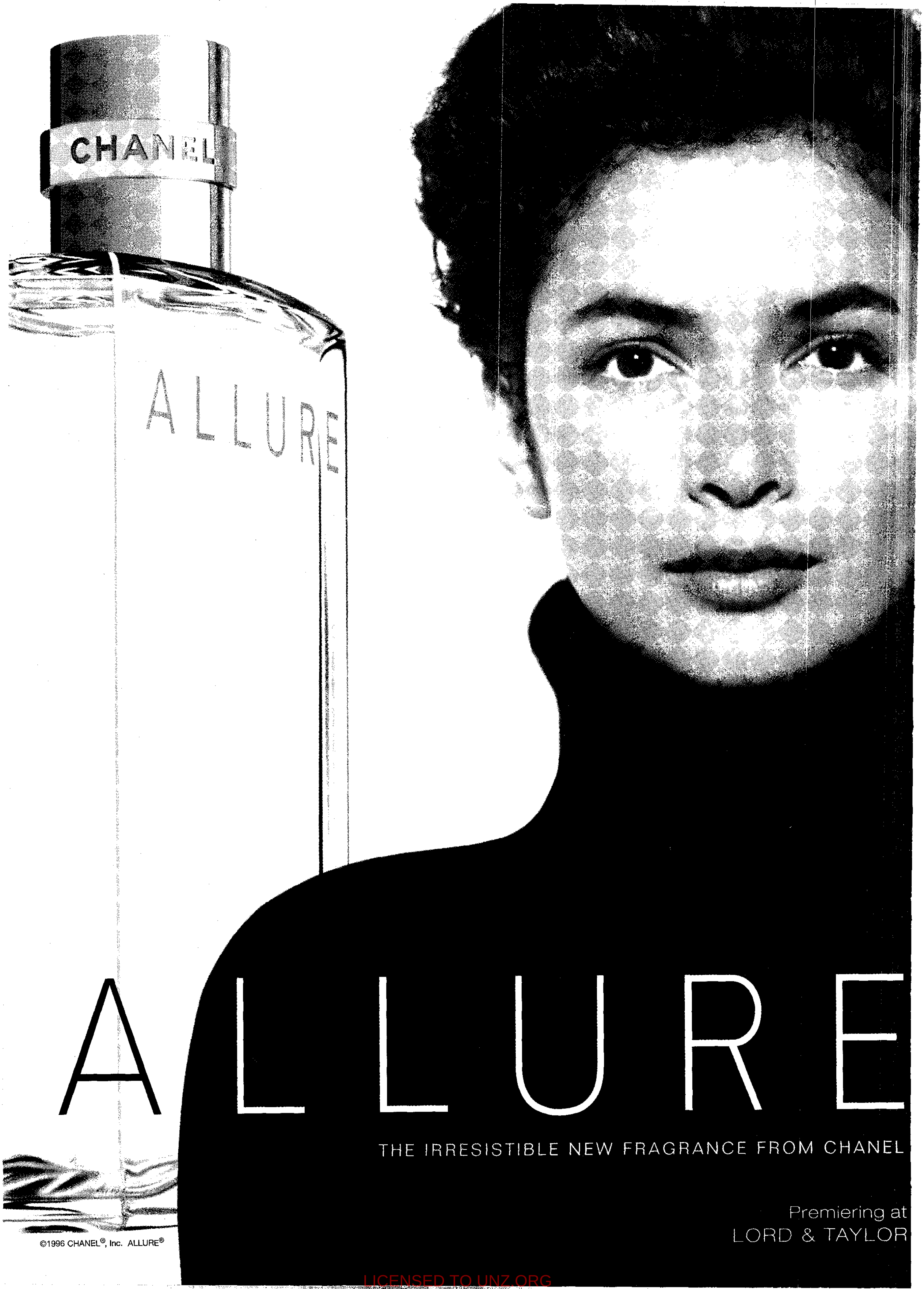
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